PREFACE IN THE KUṞAḶ

PREFACE IN THE KURAL

A Comparative Study of the first forty couplets of the Kuṛaḷ with English renderings of G. U. Pope, F. W. Ellis, W. H. Drew and C. J. Beschi and their commentaries and also the commentaries of Parimēl Aḻakar, Maṇakkudavar, Paritiyār and Kālinkar.

BY

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BARD OF UNIVERSAL MAN

Sage Valluvar, priest of the lowly clan,
No tongue repeats, no speech reveals thy name;
Yet, all things changing, dieth not thy fame,
For thou art bard of universal man;

And still thy 'book' above the waters wan,
Virtue, true wealth, and joy, and being's aim,
In sweetest mystic couplets doth proclaim,
Where winds sea-wafted palmy forests fan.

Haply undreamed of 'visions' glad thine eyes
In realms beyond thy fabled 'seven-fold birth',
And clouds of darkness from thy spirit roll.

While lands far-off have heard with strange surprise
Faint echoes of thy song. Through all the earth
Men hail thee brother, seer of spotless soul.

—Dr. G. U. Pope

Tiruvaḷḷuvar stands above all races, castes and sects, and what he teaches is a general human morality and wisdom.

—Prof. Winternitz

Tiruvaḷḷuvar is one of those seers whose message is intended not merely for their own age or country, but all time and for all mankind.

—V. V. S. Aiyar

TIRUKKURAḶ

An apple of gold in a net work of silver.

—DR. KARL GRAUL

In addition to the ethic of inwardness there appears in *Kuṛaḷ* the living ethic of love. There hardly exists in the literature of the world a collection of maxims in which we find so much lofty wisdom.

—ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Its (*Tirukkuṛaḷ*) inimitable terseness, its combination of literary grace and philosophic and psychological subtlety, its gracious and yet penetrating outlook on life's problems and its intensely practical approach make this series of aphorisms a source of delight to the mind and a guide and solace for the soul. * * * * The *Tirukkuṛaḷ* bears comparison with the highest efforts of the Greeks, the French and the English in the domain of epigrams and maxims and with the aphorisms of the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and Bhartruhari but in economy of expression allied with profundity of thought, it is supreme.

—DR. C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR

Nothing in the whole compass of human language can equal the force and terseness of the distiches in which the author of the *Kuṛaḷ* conveys the lessons of wisdom.

—REV. P. PERCIVAL

There has been a distinct gain to mankind by the coming of the *Kuṛaḷ* into the world and countless people have drunk deep from it and seen in it the light that has made the sun, the moon and the stars paler, as here is the light that has lighted the horizon of the heart and helped man to shape his life and destiny in accordance with its teachings.

—THE AUTHOR

TAMIL WORKS FROM WHICH QUOTATIONS ARE GIVEN

Arputat tiruvantāti
Cīvakacintāmaṇi
Ēr Eḻupatu
Iniyavai Nāṟpatu
Kambarāmāyaṇam
Manōnmaṇīyam
Mullai-p-pāṭṭu
Nāladiyār
Peruntokai
Puṟanānūṟu
Sivavākkiyar Pādalkaḷ
Silappadhikāram
Tayumānavar Pādalkaḷ
Tirumantiram
Tiruvācakam
Tiruvaḷḷuvamālai
Tiruvāymoḻi
Tolkāppiyam

Old Tamil Commentaries from which Quotations are given

Parimēl Aḻakar urai
Maṇakkudavar urai
Kālinkar urai
Paritiyār urai
Paḻaiya urai (Old Commentary)

CONTENTS

TRANSLITERATION OF TAMIL WORDS AND THEIR PRONUNCIATION

I. The Tamil vowels are twelve in number to be pronounced as in Italian.

Tamil	*Transliteration*	*Pronunciation (approximate)*
அ	a	as in p*u*nch
ஆ	ā	as in f*a*ther
இ	i	as in s*i*t
ஈ	ī	as in p*i*que
உ	u	as in f*u*ll
ஊ	ū	as in r*u*le
எ	e	as in *e*nd
ஏ	ē	as in th*ey*
ஐ	ai	as in *ai*sle, but much shorter.
ஒ	o	as in opinion
ஓ	ō	as in noble
ஔ	au	as in c*ow*.

II. Tamil consonants are eighteen in number. Some letters indicate different sounds in different places. Tamil being a soft and sweet language, no stress is made on any letter and the speaker is spared of any exertion whatsoever, a special characteristic of Tamil. The Tamil alphabet is not fully phonetic, as the Sanskrit and other Dravidian alphabets.

Tamil	1. *When mute* 2. *In the beginning of a word* 3. *After a hard consonant*	*After a soft consonant*	*In other places*	*Remarks*
க்	k	g	h	Guttural
ச்	ch	j	s as in French c	This is pronounced as a palatal sibilant
ட்	ṭ (after a hard consonant)	d as in mundane	d as in Friday	Cerebral as far back in the palate as possible. The dot under marks its very hard sound as in nau*ghty*
த்	t	as in *th*is	th	When doubled as in bu*tt*er Dental
ப்	p	b	p	Labial

Tamil	*Transliter-ation*	*Pronunciation (approximate)*	*Remarks*
ங்	ṅ (before g)	as in singing	Guttural n
ஞ்	ñ	as in ginger	Palatal n
ண்	ṇ	as in sand n stopped as far back as possible	Cerebral n
ந், ன்	n	as in English	
ம்	m	as in English	
ய்	y	as in English	
வ்	v	as in English	
ல்	l	as in English	
ர்	r	as in English (when soft)	Dental
ழ்	ḷ	Has the sound of ḷ with the tongue taken as far back as possible in the throat	Peculiar to Tamil Cerebral
ள்	l	l pronounced by the palate	Palatal l
ற்	ṛ	a rolling r ; when doubled as in matri-mony-ttṛi ; when preceded by n as in contra-tṛ	Palatal

The Tamil Consonants are in the following order :

k, ṅ, c, ñ, ṭ, ṇ, t, n, p, m, y, r, l, v, ḻ, ḷ, ṟ, and ṉ.

These are classified into three categories :

(1) hard, (2) soft and (3) in-between.

Hard : k, c, ṭ, t, p, ṟ

Soft : y, r, l, v, ḻ, ḷ

In-between : ṅ, ñ, ṇ, n, m, ṉ

There is not much of a difference in pronunciation between the two n's.

III. There is a letter called *āyta eḻuttu* denoted by three points thus (.˙.), generally used in poetry and is pronounced like 'h' in English as in pa*h*lavi. *h* is *not*, repeat *not*, silent.

INTRODUCTION

The first four chapters in the *Tirukkuṛaḷ*, in short the *Kuṛaḷ*, go to make the preface. The four chapters are (1) In Praise of God, (2) Excellence of Rain, (3) Greatness of Those Who Renounced and (4) Emphasising the Efficacy of Virtue. Dr. G. U. Pope says: "Complete in itself, the sole work of its author the *Kuṛaḷ* has come down the stream of ages absolutely uninjured, hardly a single various reading of any importance being found." This is shared by almost all. The *Kuṛaḷ* is a work free of interpolations. But here too, V. O. Chidambaram Pillai utters a note of discord. He has expressed the view that the first three chapters are interpolations which must have been included by a mediaeval poet, as the couplets in these chapters lack depth unlike the other couplets; the meanings in these couplets are not free from obstacles; the chapters "Knowledge of the True" and "Renunciation" are already there in the work; the necessity for the chapters "In Praise of God" and "Greatness of Those Who Renounced" is redundant; definitions of God as found in the chapters "Knowledge of the True" and "In Praise of God" cannot be from the pen of one author.[1] V. O. Chidambaram Pillai's has been a lone voice that does not find an echo from any other. This is not the place for going into the merits of his views. But suffice it to say, that these chapters have drawn laurels not only from indigenous scholars but also from European students of the *Kuṛaḷ*, who may be credited with objectivity. Professor V. A. Devasenapathi has perhaps in view the observation of V. O. Chidambaram Pillai when he says:

> "The first chapter, 'In Praise of God', is not a loose adjunct to the *Tirukkuṛaḷ* or an

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1. V. O. Chidambaram Pillai: *Tiruvaḷḷuvar Tirukkuṛaḷ*.

interpolation. It is organic to the whole work. It portrays God in a manner acceptable to all faiths, as a Supreme Being of auspicious qualities and teaches worship of God in thought, word and deed or with body, mind and spirit. It is remarkable that the need for the integration of the human personality, on the highest level, viz., the divine, is so clearly stressed."[2]

This book 'Preface in the *Kuṛaḷ*' has five chapters, the first being an introductory one under the title, 'The Book of Universal Wisdom'. The succeeding four chapters deal with the first four chapters of the *Kuṛaḷ*. To be precise, English translations of the first forty couplets of this immortal work are given with transliterations and commented on together with English renderings of the couplets by Dr. G. U. Pope (1886), F. W. Ellis (1812) and W. H. Drew (1840) and English renderings of C. J. Beschi's Latin commentry for the first ten couplets. The English renderings of Tamil commentaries of earlier commentators like Parimēl Aḻakar, Maṇakkudavar and Kālinkar as also commentaries of twentieth century writers like T. V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar are also given, though not for all the couplets. Commentaries of G. U. Pope and F. W. Ellis are freely quoted, as also English translations of Tamil commentaries by them, to save labour. It may be noticed that a considerable portion of translations from Tamil into English has been done by me. There are several translations of the *Kuṛaḷ* by scholars both Tamil and non-Tamil. Of the Europeans, only G. U. Pope has translated the entire work, while F. W. Ellis, W. H. Drew, C. J. Beschi and H. A. Popley have done only part of it. G. U. Pope has given in his work the English translation of F. W. Ellis and the

2. V. A. Devasenapathi : *The Ethics of the Kuṛaḷ*

Latin translation of C. J. Beschi. The English renderings of the Latin commentary for the first ten couplets were kindly made available to me by Rev. Fr. V. M. Gnanaprakasam, S.J., currently working on Tamil and English translations from Latin, to whom I am grateful. There are English translations of the entire work by V. V. S. Aiyar, V. R. R. Dikshitar, A. Chakravarti, K M. Balasubramaniam, Suddhananda Bharati, G. Vanmikanathan and Kasthuri Srinivasan, to name a few. While the English renderings of G.U. Pope, F.W. Ellis, W.H. Drew, besides those of the author for the forty couplets, are given subject to availability, more renderings of a representative character have been given for some couplets, considered controversial. The idea is to enable the reader to have access to different view points.

Of the five chapters in the book, the first two appeared in the January 1968 and April–June 1969 issues of "Shakti," New Delhi. The two chapters have since been revised. It may be of interest to know that literal translations of the first forty couplets by G. U. Pope have heen given in the articles appearing in the "Indian Antiquary" while the metrical translations of the couplets appear in his book "The Sacred Kural" (1886). Both the translations are given in this book to facilitate comparison. The propriety of providing more than one translation may be open to question. A careful study of G. U. Pope's translation and commentary as also those of F. W. Ellis will reveal how difficult the search has been to find out the correct meanings in a number of places. Besides labouring hard themselves, they had to seek enlightenment from the Tamil commentaries. The different translations may be of help to those interested in grasping the meanings and understanding the message of Tiruvaḷḷuvar to mankind. It may be seen that the book contains not only important English renderings

of the first forty couplets but also an array of commentaries giving out interpretations which would stimulate further research. Transliteration of each of the couplets is given, as also the literal meaning for each word for all the couplets chronologically and alphabetically as appendices.

Tamil is one of the oldest languages of the world. It is both a classical as well as a modern language. To the extent it must have been studied and interpreted to the world, it has not been. It was due to the labour of love of Christian missionaries working and living in South India that the treasures contained in it slowly trickled to the West. Tamilology today has found many ardent adherents abroad and the necessity for undertaking a serious and systematic study of Tamil has been realised not a day too soon. Excerpts from the views expressed by Dr. A. K. Ramanujan, Professor of Dravidian Studies and Linguistics in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations of the University of Chicago in an interview may be of interest :

> " For a long time, Indian civilisation was thought of only as the civilisation of classical India and expressed mainly in Sanskrit. For over a hundred years in Europe and America they have had Sanskrit studies.
>
> Now people are beginning to realise that there are many Indias. It is not one India and India is not just in the past. India has a live, long standing continuous tradition and it is a multiple tradition.
>
> In the study of this multiple tradition we need the living languages. We need all the different linguistic traditions to be represented, not only Sanskrit but also Dravidian traditions, and the tribal traditions which are just beginning to be explored. And not merely

the classical or the written but also the folk traditions.

Until we have some idea of, and some acquaintance with all of these various parts of our present and past, the picture of India will not be complete. It will be partial and it will be unbalanced.

The recognition of such imbalance is one reason why Dravidian studies and particularly Tamil studies are increasingly receiving attention.

One of the things we are trying to do—especially in Chicago—is to encourage students to do both Sanskrit and Tamil. We have a number of Sanskrit students who know Tamil and vice versa. For a total picture of Indian civilisation and Indian linguistics we need both these classical but contrasted languages."[3]

To the above views of Dr. A. K. Ramanujan, I wrote my reaction which runs as under:

"The scholarly replies given by Dr. Ramanujan not only summarise what has been done so far in the field of Dravidian studies in the University of Chicago but also pinpoint what is proposed to be done in such studies which are becoming increasingly important. The interview has enabled Dr. Ramanujan to think aloud the basic premise inevitable in the pursuit of Dravidian studies. A study of India cannot be complete-be it anthropology or linguistics, culture or civilisation-unless as Dr. Ramanujan says, *it is conceded* (Italics mine) that for a total picture of Indian civilisation and Indian linguistics, 'we need

3. 'SPAN', New Delhi – August, 1970.

> both these classical but contrasted languages,' i. e., Sanskrit and Tamil.
>
> In the Sangam poetry of Tamil, the ideas are direct and simple and their universal appeal cannot, in any way, be underestimated. In this task of interpreting Tamil, a language which has a continuity in literature for over 2000 years-a rare record excelled by few languages in the world, Dr. Ramanujan has the advantage of standing away from the environment to be objective. In the study of Tamil classics, an unbiased and detached mind of a scholar spots unerringly the universal values and appeal in the views expressed by Dr. Ramanujan in the interview."[4]

In comparison with certain literary works of some languages of later origin, some of the outstanding works in Tamil literature have not been projected to the extent they should have been. The *Kuṟaḷ* recognised as one of the finest products of man's brain lofty as the sayings of Jesus, Socrates, the Buddha and the *Bhagavad Gīta*, has not been used by the world of scholars sufficiently. Not much literature has grown around it either in the West or in the East and the position is deplorable in India, especially in non-Tamil areas notwithstanding the incipient enthusiasm on the part of a few. Taking advantage of the awakening in the world of scholars to probe into the Tamil classics, an intensive study of this great work must be encouraged. It must be the concern of students of Tamil to do their mite in assisting the Tamilologists to get at the requisite material. It is towards this end in view that this book has been written.

4. 'SPAN', New Delhi—December, 1970

I have restricted my study mostly within the commentaries on the Kuṟaḷ, both Indian and foreign. No modern scholar can escape from utilising the accumulated wisdom of other distinguished scholars by quotations from their works. I have metioned such names in foot-notes as also in the bibliography giving details of the publishers, wherever available. I am indebted to them, though due to shortage of time I could not contact them direct, which I trust they will not mind.

I propose to write on the remaining 1,290 couplets on the pattern followed in this book. It is a stupendous task which may engage me for some years if it is realised that this book has covered roughly a thirtieth part of the *Kuṟaḷ*. Depend as I must on libraries for books on the subject for consultation, a nucleus collection may, to some extent, relieve the pressure on my time. Stenographic assistance may go a long way in relieving me of the avoidable labour of copying and writing, now done manually, besides saving time. Any assistance in this regard from educational foundations, cultural organisations, research institutes and the like will be most welcome from any part of the globe and will be gratefully received and acknowledged.

I am very much indebted to Mr. R. Muthukumarasamy, Librarian, Maṟaimalai Adikaḷ Library, Madras, and his devoted staff for the help and assistance in making available their fine collection of books on the *Kuṟaḷ* and providing facilities to carry on my work conveniently during the period I was working there. My thanks are due to Messrs. M. Seshachalam & Co., Mr. M. N. Rao in particular, without whose active help and cooperation this book might not have seen the light of day.

Madras. **K. C. KAMALIAH**

CHAPTER I

THE BOOK OF UNIVERSAL WISDOM

The '*Kuṛaḷ*' is a monumental work in Tamil, both for its contents and the universal message it preaches to mankind. '*Kuṛaḷ*' means 'Shortmetre' and each one is really a pearl, being a couplet. There are 1330 of them in all in 133 chapters of 10 couplets each, divided into three parts-Virtue, Wealth and Pleasure. While writing a pre-publication review of an English translation of the 'Sacred *Kuṛaḷ*' by the Rev. Dr. G. U. Pope, R. C. Temple observed :

> "The *Kuṛaḷ* is not only the first work of its own language but as 'one of the highest and purest expressions of human thought', has also interest far beyond the ten millions of speakers of Tamil .... It is characteristic of an Indian book that it should be without date and anonymous, for *Kuṛaḷ* really means nothing but 'couplet' and Tiruvaḷḷuvar is a mere title of the priestly teachers of the lowly Pariahs of Madras. *This view does not meet with the approval of all.* (*Italics mine.*) Of the author nothing is really known except that he was a weaver and lived at Mayilāpūr, that suburb of Madras town, renowned throughout the Christian world as S. Thome, one of the earliest sites of Christianity in India. From this ancient Christian Village came one of the grandest productions of man's brain, much of which bears so strong a resemblance in thought to the Sermon on the Mount. It has accordingly been argued ere this, with much show of probability that the teachings of the Gospel influenced the nameless weaver of Mayilāpūr. I could, however, deprecate much stress being

> laid on this fact, and I perhaps sufficiently indicate my reasons by drawing attention to the Buddhist *Khuddaka Patha* which so clearly reflects the same doctrines......... The *Kuṛaḷ* is divided into three books, embracing really in a series of short stanzas the whole ethics of the daily life, not of any particular race or people but of mankind generally......... In its own land, the *Kuṛaḷ* owes its popularity as much to the beauty of its versification as to its morality, but it is in its breadth of view and its speaking to the heart of man that must make it a favourite with the world at large."[1]

The '*Kuṛaḷ*' is mentioned with respect and bears the name of '*Tirukkuṛaḷ*' meaning 'Sacred *Kuṛaḷ*'. In his learned review, R. C. Temple echoed the sentiments of the eminent savant and scholar, Dr. G. U. Pope that "certainly there is much here which might be compared with the teaching of the Christian scriptures, and I can fancy in the Tamil verses an echo of such words as these: 'Yet have I set my thing upon my holy hill'; 'Kiss the son lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little'; 'I have overcome the world'; 'This is the victory which overcometh the world, even your faith; He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever'."[2] But the reviewer, though a pious Christian, entered into a caveat that the *Kuṛaḷ* lends itself to echo the doctrines of the Buddha too.

Every volume of the *Kuṛaḷ* has appended to it a collection of complimentary verses - *Tiruvaḷḷuvamālai*

1. 'Sacred *Kuṛaḷ*' of Tiruvaḷḷuvā Nāyanār by Rev. Dr. G. U. Pope, DD. Note by R. C. Temple in *Indian Antiquary*—August 1886.

2. Ibid.

or Tiruvaḷḷuvar's Garland of Poetry and one of the panegyrics says:

"If Sanskrit and chaste Tamiḻ are analysed,
And both weighed to determine
Which is superior to which,
It is not possible to say;
Because Sanskrit possesses the *Vēdas*,
And Tamiḻ, the *Kuṛaḷ* of Tiruvaḷḷuvar."[3]

From another panegyric, we find "Vaḷḷuvar strong in the purifying love of his wife honoured his native Madura by his deathless didactic poem, just in the same way as Krishna reveling in the love of his beloved wife glorified his birth place Mathura with his song celestial."[4]

A devout and pious Christian as he was, Dr. Pope unfailingly spotted the sayings of the Lord Christ in the *Kuṛaḷ*. The ten couplets in the Fourth Chapter under the title, 'Commendation of Virtue' fascinated him most. He wrote:

> "I translate the ten couplets of which it is to be noted that they are perhaps on the whole the most polished in the Book; absolutely perfect, flawless gems in Tamil. The teaching of this Chapter is obviously to some extent that of the 18th Chapter of the *Gīta*: action is not to be forsaken. Great as are ascetics, it is in the performance of virtuous deed that men are to partake of the highest enjoyments and merit the greatest rewards. In this Chapter, we have, however, I believe, a higher

3. āriyamum centamiḻum ārāyntu itanin itu
cīriyatu entṛontṛai-c cepparitāl - āriyam
vētam udaittu tamiḻ tiruvaḷḷuvanār
ōtu kuraṭpā udaittu. (*Tiruvaḷḷuvamālai*, 43)

4. S. Somasundara Bharati: *Tiruvaḷḷuvar*.

moral teaching than is to be found in any Hindu book of at least earlier date than itself.

And since the writer (1) was an avowed eclectic, (2) was unfettered by caste, (3) was an inhabitant of S. Thome and so in the midst of Christians, it seems to me a natural supposition that he had heard the Sermon on the Mount. To such a man the lives and words of our blessed Lord and of his holy apostles, especially of S. Paul, would have a peculiar charm."[5]

Ten commentaries in Tamil were written on the *Kuṛaḷ* of which five are in evidence now-those of Maṇakkudavar, Paritiyār, Parimēl Aḻakar, Parip-perumāḷ and Kālinkar. Parimēl Aḻakar's is the most widely known which has earned encomiums not only from indigenous scholars but also from eminent students of Tamil like Dr. G. U. Pope and Dr. Graul. Every one marvels that this is the cómmentary for the *Kuṛaḷ* shortmetre from one going by the name of Parimēl Aḻakar of qualities of head and heart who had learnt northern works and southern Tamil in the traditional manner.[6] There is a pithy four line *veṇpā*.

" Can all milks be good cow's milk ? On the earth,
Can all books be the book made by Vaḷḷuvar ?

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5. Notes on the *Kuṛaḷ* of the Tamil Poet Tiruvaḷḷuvar by Dr. G. U. Pope, *DD. Indian Antiquary* - December 1881.

6. ituvē uraiyentṛu yāvarum viyappa

* * *

vadanūl tuṛaiyum ten ticai-t-tamiḻum
vitimuṛai payintṛa neṛiyaṛi pulavan

* * *

parimēl āḻakan enappeyar padaittu-t
taraimēl utitta talaimai yonē. (*Peruntokai*, 1543)

Can all the commentaries attempted, for this book,
Come upto the stature of Parimēl Aḻakar's learned one?
Brood o'er this."[7]

The other five commentators are Tarumar, Tāmattar, Naccar, Tirumanaiyar and Mallar. "But all the editors, European and Indian, have closely followed Parimēl Aḻakar's commentary with all its defects. Maṇakkudavar's commentary seems to be in some respects better than Parimēl Aḻakar's and his logical arrangements of the couplets in each chapter and his sensible notes are two of its bright features."[8]

Tamil commentaries apart, how else can one term the arduous labour and study put forth by Dr. G.U. Pope and F.W. Ellis in English, Fr. C.J. Beschi in Latin and Dr. Graul in German but commentaries of the highest order? The conclusion arrived at by Dr. G. U. Pope after an avid and careful study of the *Kuṛaḷ* will be shared by students of the *Kuṛaḷ* :

> "It is quite evident that the poet has selected epithets to be applied to the Supreme which admit of being explained in various senses. There is room for men of many systems to import into his verses, under the guise of commentaries, their own dogmas. Ellis sees in them an enlightened and sublime monotheism. To Beschi, they serve as exponents of the Christian Theology. The Jains delighted with the appropriation by the poet of one or two beautiful terms from their

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7. palellām nallāvin palāmo pāriluḷḷa
nūlellām vaḷḷuvarcey nūlamō—nūlil
parittavurai ellām parimēl aḻakan
territtavurai yamō teḷi. (*Peruntokai*, 1545)

8. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai : *Critical Studies in Kuṛaḷ*.

> writings, claim him as their own. Perhaps, it may be allowed me to say that I see in Tiruvaḷḷuvar a noble truth loving devout man, feeling in the darkness after God, if haply he might find him."[9]

The *Kuṛaḷ* is a work of wisdom and great intrinsic merit. Its author is a universal teacher transcending race and religion and his message is addressed to only one community and that is the community of mankind. The *Kuṛaḷ* can be taken to the very bowels of the earth and its tenets are acceptable. It stands like a sentinel and mankind will continue to profit by this torch of wisdom till eternity. It is nothing surprising, therefore, that seekers of truth, men of religion, great thinkers and reformers, dreaming a dream yearning for an ideal society, perceive in this imperishable work their philosophy of life. Christians unmistakably detect the Sermon on the Mount from this granary of teachings; Buddhistic doctrines are discernible in the work to the keen eye of R. C. Temple. Jains hail the work as theirs. The *Kuṛaḷ* is compared only to the *Vēdas* and the *Bhagavad Gīta* in Sanskrit. Such is its eminence. Dr. G. U. Pope sees in it even Muhammedan influences. What do all these reveal? It is patent that the *Kuṛaḷ* is acceptable to all strata of people in the community of mankind irrespective of their religious persuasions, social status and even political affiliations. But verily can it be said that the *Kuṛaḷ* is forthright in appeal, never compromises on fundamentals, with its affirmation of truth and negation of evil. Dr. G. U. Pope repeatedly refers to the *Kuṛaḷ* as "eclectic" and its author the "bard of universal man". European authors mostly have been under some illusion about the antiquity of

9. Notes on the *Kuṛaḷ* of the Tamil Poet Tiruvaḷḷuvar by Dr. G. U. Pope, DD. *Indian Antiquary*—November, 1879.

Indian works in general and Tamil works in particular. The *Kuṛaḷ* is decisively anterior to Christ and by no stretch of imagination could it have come to exist only from 1000 to 1200 A.D. according to Dr. G. U. Pope. Dr. Caldwell assigned to the *Kuṛaḷ* "a date not later than the ninth century A.D". The one dominant factor unique in the *Kuṛaḷ* is its universal appeal and few books in the entire range of human literature from the dawn of history would be as much acceptable as the *Kuṛaḷ* to humanity at large. The distinctive and characteristic nature of early Tamil poetry predominantly secular has been missed by many which accounts for the absence of a proper approach to early Tamil works including the *Kuṛaḷ* and their assessment. A great work of enduring value cannot be created by paddings and, however eminent the sources, the patched-up net-work remains at all times artificial and will have to fall apart sometime or other. That the *Kuṛaḷ* is an original work is beyond doubt. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai writes :

> "The triple treatise of Morality, Material Prosperity and Affection won immediate applause in the author's lifetime. Kallādar has praised it as a moral code for the whole of humanity, irrespective of colour, creed and community and has set forth the way of good from the world's point of view, unbiassed by any narrow sectarian prejudices. Hence its popularity all the world over - in England, Italy, France, Germany not to speak of India. 'Though dead he yet speaketh.' To think is to live; and he by whom the reality and responsibility of life on earth was thought out in all its manifold bearings and aspects, still lives in the living memory of millions. Nineteen centuries have not diminished the weight of his authority or the vitality of his utterances. He lives and his fame will increase with the flight of

time; and as long as men continue to revere the true and the good, will the words of the poet continue to inspire them; and gain him a seat with the great teachers of the world."[10]

Parimēl Aḻakar, the noted commentator himself observes that it is natural with the author to accept good things in all works and narrate them acceptable to all. S. Somasundara Bharati ably meets the arguments of those that rely on a few words of Parimēl Aḻakar taken out of context to substantiate a theory belittling the originality of the work and passing on the credit to Manu, Chanakya and other Sanskrit writers:

> "Parimēl Aḻakar nowhere countenances a theory that *Kuṛaḷ* is a mere collection of exerpts and maxims derived even from the pre-Chanakya Dharma-Śastras like Manu, which admittedly are the sources Chanakya and men of his ilk draw from. On the other hand, what the commentator does in these and many similar passages is only to draw attention by comparing and contrasting parallels to points of similarity or other wise in the two great cultures of the Aryans and the Tamils as regards their institutions and outlook in the several provinces of ethics, politics or erotics. He indicates no intention whatsoever to suggest any indebtedness of Vaḷḷuvar to any prior Sanskrit original sources for inspiration of ideas. The panegyrics known as '*Vaḷḷuvamālai*' expressly state that, if anything, *Kuṛaḷ* may be compared to the Āryan *Vēdas* and its place and position in the Tamil Language is the same which *Vēdas* occupy in Sanskrit."
>
> * * * * *
>
> "Parimēl Aḻakar frequently points out and emphasises the peculiarly Tamil institutions and conventions mentioned in *Kuṛaḷ* by contrasting

10. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai: *Critical Studies in Kuṛaḷ*.

them with their Āryan parallels, thus warranting the natural opinion that *Kuṛaḷ* is an original Tamil work treating of the ethical, political and domestic ideals of the early Tamils. A morbid passion to deduce or derive everything good in Tamil literature from a Sanskrit orginal will be as reasonable or acceptable to sober thought, as the equally culpable modern craze in evidence in some quarters to deny to Sanskrit literature all originality, and to try to convict all Āryan writers of plagiarism and perverse vandalism, and proclaim all Sanskrit books the second-hand translation of non-existing or imaginary Tamil originals, said to have been deliberately destroyed by the plagiarists to prevent discovery of their sins and to pretend originality. The sober truth almost always comes out all the clearer for all such frothy controversies. *Kuṛaḷ* may have its parallels to many rare ideas in Sanskrit classics. But mere parallelism in ideas or concepts would prove nothing. Numerous closest parallels are found in the poems of Shakespeare, Shadi and Kālidāsa. But no sane student of literature will ever deduce connection between these master-poets on that account. *Kuṛaḷ* is an old Tamil classic, treasuring up all that is valuable or worth preserving in early Tamil culture: and and its merit cannot be detracted merely by suggested similitude between some ideas, or customs or institutions referred to therein and those in other Sanskrit, or for that matter in Arabic or Greek writings. Its age, as its worth is to be tested by other testimonies acceptable to known methods of logical and historic comparison and research".[11]

Not much benefit will accrue in comparing Manu with Tiruvaḷḷuvar. Perhaps, a study of contrast

11. S. Somasundara Bharati; *Tiruvaḷḷuvar.*

would be more relevant and useful than one of comparison. The linchpin on which the *Kuṛaḷ* stands is love and nothing but love. None is born high or low. It is not birth that is a deciding factor in determining superiority or inferiority. Tiruvaḷḷuvar unambigously declares that " all souls are born alike."[12]

But how dogmatic, emphatic and categerical are the utterances of Manu who " legislated, decreed and mandated openly in the interest of some to the detriment of others".[13] " Manu is fanatically hard on Śūdras. His hatred for them is unbounded", continues Chitra Tiwari who observes: " They (the Śūdras and other lower castes) generally arose as a result of the clash of class interests and the *Smṛtis* perpetuated their state through inequitable and discriminating legislation. From the *Manusmṛti*, it is evident on every step that that great treatise.............. breathes contempt for the lower castes on every page. The birth of the Śūdras and the untouchables itself is explained as being incidental to sin. They are there indeed to suffer for what they have rendered in previous births."[14]

Mainly because of its universal appeal and secular character, the *Kuṛaḷ* is popularly known as *Tamiḻ Maṛai*—the Tamil Scripture and deals with ethical, social and economic matters in all its implications. The immortal work of Tiruvaḷḷuvar has, throughout its existance of two thousand years, been a beacon light to mankind and such of those who have come in touch with it have drunk deep in this fountain of knowledge. It has been acclaimed mainly as a moral

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12. pirapokkum ellā vuyirkkūm. (*Tirukkuṛaḷ*—972)
13. Chitra Tiwari: *Śūdras in Manu.*
14. Ibid

code and Tiruvaḷḷuvar, the law-giver, has puzzled the most modern of all modern jurists by his downright but clear dictums. The rod of justice he wields had evoked the admiration and acknowledgment of kings in the Tamil Country for whom the *Kuṟaḷ* had been a guide. There is no author in the entire range of South Indian literature in general and Tamil literature in particular, saint, sage or the common man, who has not been influenced by the *Kuṟaḷ* since it saw the light of day. The very modest tribute of M. Ariel is true and appealing. "That which above all is wonderful in *Kuṟaḷ* is the fact that its author addresses himself without regard to castes, people or beliefs, to the whole community of mankind, the fact that he formulates sovereign morality, absolute reason that he proclaims, in their very essence in this eternal abstractedness, virtue and truth that he presents as it were in one group the highest views of domestic and social life"[15]

But how about Tiruvaḷḷuvar? He harbours no evil and hears no evil. To him the path of love is the way to salvation. Tiruvaḷḷuvar desires the Kingdom of Love to flourish for the emancipation of man. Bereft of love, he recognises only the skin and the bone in a man; sees only the corpse and no life.

> "In the path of love endures life; to those without love,
> It is only a body covered by skin and bone."[16]

It is repeated *ad nauseum* that many ideas of the Arthaśāstra are found in the *Kuṟaḷ* and hence Tiruvaḷḷuvar must have lived later than the 4th

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15. *Journal Asiatique*: 1824.
16. anpin vaḻiyatu uyirnilai aḥtilārkku
enpu tōl pōrtta uḍampu. (*Tirukkuṟal*, 80)

Century B.C. In order to make a thorough research for establishing a contact between the two works, three questions arise:

(1) Were there no works on Finance before Kauṭilya?
(2) Is it correct to maintain that Kauṭilya lived before the 4th Century B.C.?
(3) Is it appropriate to hold that Tiruvaḷḷuvar upheld Kauṭilya's ideas? [17].

Posing these questions, Dr. B. Natarajan draws the conclusion that in as much as Kauṭilya himself in his work makes obeisance to Shukra and Brihaspati, the two should have been eminent authors of works on Finance. Kauṭilya says that his work is a collection of previous works on Finance. While narrating the Minister's qualifications, Kauṭilya quotes from Bharadwaj, Visalaksha, Parasara, Pisuna, Gunapatant, Vadavipathi, the son of Pakutanti and draws his own conclusions. As such, it is clear that there should have existed numerous works on Finance, before Kauṭilya.

Six facts lend evidence to deduce that Kauṭilya lived a few centuries later than the Mauryas.

(1) In order to prove that Kauṭilya lived in the 3rd Century B.C., certain authors' periods have to coincide with the same. But it cannot be said with certainty that these authors would have lived earlier than the 3rd Century A.D.

(2) It is said in the Arthaśāstra that Sanskrit was the official language. But the official language during the Mauryan times was Prākrit. According to Kauṭilya, the letters were sixty three. The letters numbered forty-three during the Mauryan period.

17. Dr. B. Natarajan: Tirukkuṛaḷ and Econmics—Silver Jubilee Number of Tiruvaḷḷuvar Kaḻakam, Tenkasi.

(3) The fortress wall, as is mentioned in Kauṭilya's work, was of brick. But Chandragupta's fortress wall, according to Greek authors, was buit of wood.

(4) Decorations mentioned in Arthaśāstra did not conform to Mauryan times.

(5) The terms used by Kauṭilya to denote official designations are found in later stone inscriptions; but, there is no trace of the same in Mauryan stone inscriptions.

(6) Certain land frontiers indicated by Kauṭilya were not known to the people of Mauryan times.

In conformity with the research of Berriedale Keith, Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* belongs to the 4th Century A.D. and not to the 4th Century B.C. If it is taken that Tiruvaḷḷuvar wrote the Second Book of *Kuṛaḷ* i.e., Wealth, on the pattern of Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*, then Tiruvaḷḷuvar should have lived later than the 4th Century A.D. This cannot stand the test, as phrases and ideas found in the *Kuṛaḷ* have been liberally used in *Maṇimēkhalai* and *Silappadhikāram*. No Indian author who is conversant with ancient Tamil poetry can ever conclude thus.

After all this argument, Dr. B. Natarajan rules out that the *Kuṛaḷ* is, in any way, indebted to the Arthaśāstra. There is not much of common ground between Tiruvaḷḷuvar and Kauṭilya. In the basic ideas, the two—the *Kuṛāḷ* and the *Arthaśāstra*—do not meet. Tiruvaḷḷuvar sees the ploughman as the linchpin of the world. He considers ploughing as the best of occupations and assigns a place to the ploughman, free from subservience to others.[18] He is not to look to others for his morsel of food, while the rest of society cannot exist without him, because next to air

18. *Tirukkuṛaḷ*, 1032.

and water, food is the essential ingredient for life. And the *Kuṟaḷ* offers the pedestal of pride to the ploughman in human society.

> * "Who ploughing eat their food they truly live ;
> The rest to others bend subservient, eating what they give."[19]

But the Arthaśāstra decrees to collect taxes by coaxing or threatening the ploughman. Tiruvaḷḷuvar shuns liquors. But Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* appoints a supervisor to prepare and propagate drinks.[20] Tiruvaḷḷuvar has devoted a full chapter of ten couplets on "Not drinking". Even a mother feels sorry to see her son drunk.

> † "The drunkard's joy is sorrow to his mother's eyes ;
> What must it be in presence of the truly wise?"[21]

Men of wisdom and pioneers of human thought and intelligence have never failed to be attracted by the *Kuṟaḷ*. Of all the ethical works in the world, it is the *Kuṟaḷ* alone which steers clear from controversies and takes life to be a reality and not something to be shunned, neglected or regretted for. How Albert Schweitzer views the *Kuṟaḷ* offers some food for thought :

> "What a difference between the *Kuṟaḷ* and the Laws of Manu, which originated some four centuries before it. In the latter under the

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* G.U. Pope's translation.

† G.U. Pope's translation.

19. uḻutuṇdu vāḻvārē vāḻvārmat ṟellām
toḻutuṇdu pincel pavar. (*Tirukkuṟaḷ*, 1033)

20. Dr. B. Natarajan: Tirukkuṟaḷ and Economics-Silver Jubilee Number of Tiruvaḷḷuvar Kaḻakam, Tenkāsi.

21. īnṟaḷ mukattēyum innātāl enmattṟu-c
cānṟōr mukattu-k kaḷi. (*Tirukkuṟaḷ*, 923)

dominance of the Brahmanic spirit world and life affirmation is still just tolerated alongside world and life negation. In the *Kuṛaḷ* world and life negation is only like a distant cloud in the sky. In the ethics of the *Kuṛaḷ* as in those of the Laws of Manu, the idea of reward has a place. Ethics in the *Kuṛaḷ* are not entirely dominated by the idea of reward as in Brahmanism, Buddhism and the *Bhagavad Gīta*. We already find here the knowledge that good must be done for its own sake. Like the Buddha and the *Bhagavad Gīta*, the *Kuṛaḷ* desires inner freedom from the world and a mind free from hatred. Like them it stands for the commandment not to kill and not to damage.

" In opposition to the Buddha, the *Kuṛaḷ* decides that one may not eat meat even when one is quite innocent of the slaughter of the animal. It has appreciated all the valuable ethical results of the thought of world and life negation. But in addition to this ethic of inwardness there appears in the *Kuṛaḷ* the living ethic of love. With sure strokes the *Kuṛaḷ* draws the ideal of simple ethical humanity. On the most varied questions concerning the conduct of man to himself and to the world its utterances are characterised by nobility and good sense. There hardly exists in the literature of the world a collection of maxims in which we find so much lofty wisdom." [22]

Legends have been woven round Tiruvaḷḷuvar, the author of the *Kuṛaḷ*. He was deserted at his very birth, so the story goes, as also the earlier six children, by his parents, a Brahmin youth and a Pariah girl. His vocation was weaving and his wife was Vāsuki, a paragon of chastity. A sea-captain, Ēlēla Singan was his friend. 'Vaḷḷuvar' is a caste among the so called 'untouchables' today, which term referred to the

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22. Albert Scheweitzer: *Indian Thought and Its Development.*

Lord Chamberlain in a king's court as mentioned in Tamil classsics. "The Vaḷḷuvars or heralds are spoken of as the high officer in a verse by Pālaikkautamanār."[23] Caste came to South India from the north not in very early times and the absence of any word in the Dravidian languages to indicate caste is a pointer to it. Ever since caste eroded into the fabric of Dravidian society, there has been a consistent and continued opposition to it and it has come for severe criticism even at the hands of the Tamil hymnists. The Tamil Siddhar, Sivavākkiyar does not mince words in decrying caste. But he lived at least ten centuries later than Tiruvaḷḷuvar. Caste was a thing unknown to the early Tamils. Tiruvaḷḷuvar's 'lowly birth' cannot be confirmed simply by advancing the argument that 'Vaḷḷuvar' is a caste among the untouchables to-day. Caste did not make any impact in early Dravidian society nor could it have been a force when Tiruvaḷḷuvar lived. The stories that have been built around Tiruvaḷḷuvar have, by and large, to be cast away, as they have no moorings. Because the *Kuṟaḷ* is an outstanding work and its teachings have a common appeal, the author's period has more or less become a coin in the chess board of scholars, being moved to and fro to suit their views and new meanings read into the couplets. But the *Kuṟaḷ* has the privilege of not having been much tampered with in the textual reading at any time during the period of more than 2000 years of its existence, thanks to the vigilance of the people and the constant use of the couplets rolling in their tongues. Even the commentators of the *Kuṟaḷ* emerged a thousand years later than the *Kuṟaḷ*. Because of the constant use of the *Kuṟaḷ* by the people, any variation was likely to be detected and it did not allow any elbow room to the

23. S. Somasundara Bharati: *Tiruvaḷḷuvar*.

unscrupulous to delete from or add to it during its long history of existence. The vigil has paid dividends after all, as the work is for ever preserved for posterity and today the number of persons who can quote the *Kuṛaḷ* verbatim from memory is considerable in the Tamil speaking world.

Before plunging into a study of the *Kuṛaḷ* and to get profited by its wisdom, it would be worthwhile to have a foretaste of it. The author of the *Kuṛaḷ* soars high above in the world; but his stature is not due to any aloofness from his fellow creatures but due to being part of them. He makes one think along with him and the reader feels a sense of participation and ultimately the saying sticks till the very end of his life. The author of the *Kuṛaḷ* belongs to the few who do not want to wound the feelings of even those who administer poison to them. It is far easier to gulp down the poison rather than to exhibit the feeling of rousing the sense of guilt in the mind of the poisoner. As between the poisoner and the poisoned, it is the latter who has to be vigilant so that the former is not embarassed. The poisoned witnesses the poison being poured into the cup before his very eyes, but he shrinks not. He has been made of such mettle and has such bearing, dignity, and courtesy that he empties the cup with composure and calm. The height to which he rises because of his conduct is not one that can be assessed by the mortals. He is far rather worried about the feeling of the sinner than of his own existence, as he is, first and foremost, the very embodiment of decent behaviour and sin has a hearty meal of this prey. About such men, Tiruvaḷḷuvar talks not in singular but he sees many such noble souls. Here is the marvellous gem :

" Even while seeing poison being poured for them,

Those at the pinnacle of courtesy will empty the cup of poison, cool and composed." [24]

The anxiety of the author of the *Kural* in producing a great work of wisdom can be matched only by his economy in words and their aptness. Every word that is pressed into use has come through the furnace after having been hammered well with the certainty that no other word can supplant it. Dr. G. U. Pope was struck by "the brevity rendered necessary by the form (which) gives an oracular effect to the utterances of the great Tamil 'Master of the sentences'."[25] The words that make up the edifice are the basic inevitable material and in this Tiruvalluvar exercises the utmost caution and discretion. The right word has to be chosen for expressing the right idea. The characteristic of the Tamil language is that no two words denote the same meaning. Hence it is all the more necessary to use the right word. This is one of the reasons for the *Kural* being an outstanding work. Not only that. Any couplet may be taken at random and subjected to rigorous tests. A systematic examination will reveal that no other set of equal, more or lesser number of words would fit in with the idea expressed. The author of the *Kural* is not only an outstanding man of wisdom, but also an outstanding man of letters. No wonder, therefore, R. C. Temple suggested a "separate publication of the translation (of the *Kural*) as a work of pure literature and one of no small interest withal."[26] The author

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24. peyakkandum nañcundu amaivar nayattakka
nākarikam vēndu pavar. (*Tirukkural*, 580)

25. Notes on the *Kural* of the Tamil poet, Tiruvalluvar by Dr. G. U. Pope, DD. *Indian Antiquary* - Sept. 1878.

26. 'Sacred *Kural*' of Tiruvalluva Nāyanār by Rev. Dr. G. U. Pope, DD. Note by R. C. Temple in *Indian Antiquary* - August 1886.

of the *Kuṟaḷ* has made his work to be an ideal one to conform to what he lays down :

> " Speak out the word, with the certainty,
> That none other can excel it."[27]

What are the functions of literature? Though many can be listed, the most important is that the work should show the path of virtue and there can be no greater wealth than this. Tiruvaḷḷuvar gives this pre-eminent position not even to works of ethics and literature but to the spoken word. One should comprehend fully what he speaks, as there is no greater virtue or wealth than this.

> " Understand the qualities of your hearers and then make your speech;
> For superior to it, there is neither virtue nor wealth " [28]

The *Kuṟaḷ* does not use words more than what are absolutely necessary. The author of the *Kuṟaḷ* considers the spoken word superior to virtue and wealth. In other words, it is the spoken word that leads one to the path of virtue. Economy in words, brevity in saying, propounding of theories universally applicable to the species of man, recognition of the dignity of man, rejecting outright outmoded and anti-diluvian notions of superiority, are some of the characteristics found in the *Kuṟaḷ*.

"Being spotless in mind is virtue suffice", says the *Kuṟal*.[29] How is purity of mind obtained? Tiruvaḷḷuvar worshipped at the altar of truth and

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27. colluka collai - p piritōrcol accollai
vellumcol inmai aṟintu. (*Tirukkuṟaḷ*, 645)

28. tiṟanaṟintu colluka collai aṟanum
poruḷum ataninūuṅ kil. (*Tirukkuṟaḷ*, 644)

29. manattukkaṉ mācila nātal anaittaṟan. (*Tirukkuṟaḷ*, 34)

purity of mind is attained by virtue of one's addiction to truth.

> " External purity can be had by water ;
> Purity of mind can be perceived by adherence
> to truth." [30]

Truth and love are the two inevitable guidelights that shine throughout in the *Kuṛaḷ* and they are the two reliable companions to man on earth for leading a life of virtue beneficial to him as well as to the rest of society. Whoever has come in contact with the *Kuṛaḷ*, he or she has been benefited beyond measure. There has been a distinct gain to mankind by the coming of the *Kuṛaḷ* into the world and countless people have drunk deep from it and seen in it the light that has made the sun, the moon and the stars paler, as here is the light that has lighted the horizon of the heart and helped man to shape his life and destiny in accordance with its teachings.

'*Tiruvaḷḷuvamālai*' or the 'Garland of Tiruvaḷḷuvar's poetry' are panegyrics, fifty-three in number attributed to poets, several of whom were Sangam poets, all in the *veṇpā* form. One is attributed to the Bodiless i.e., from the heavens, another to Nāmakaḷ (Goddess of Learning) and a third one to God (Iṛaiyanār). As to who really were the authors of these stanzas involves research, but suffice it to say that that these eulogistic poems spotlight the work is beyond question. Their depth and impartial assessment of the *Kuṛaḷ* are also beyond doubt. These help the reader to comprehend the real worth of the work and these stanzas themselves are poems of a high order, noted for clarity and content. While some of the poets have bracketed the *Kuṛaḷ* and the

30. puṛantūymai nīran amaiyum akantūymai
vāymaiyāṛ kāṇappadum. (*Tirukkuṛaḷ*, 298)

Vēdas for comparison, one of them, Kōtamanār expresses the opinion that the *Kuṛaḷ* excels the *Vēdas.* The *Vēdas* were not *written* to avoid the less competent reciting them so that their efficacy may not diminish. But Kōtamanār has expressed his conviction that the efficacy of the *Kuṛaḷ* shall not diminish though it is written and recited, both by the competent and the incompetent.[31] Another verse of Nappālattanār spots in the *Kuṛaḷ* the lamp that is lighted to dispel darkness from the minds of those inhabiting the earth.[32] Kavuṇiyanār visualises the *Kuṛaḷ* as sweet to the heart, sweet to the ear and sweet in the mouth.[33] Maturaippālaciriyanār has said that while Jupiter and Venus, the sparkling Sun and the white-rayed Moon remove instantly outer darkness, Vaḷḷuvar's spotless *Kuṛaḷ* is the light that banishes from the hearts of people in this world the darkness within.[34] Besides these fifty-three *veṇpās*, there are two couplets by Idaikkādar and Auvaiyār, which highlight the magnificence of the *Kuṛaḷ.* Idaikkādar says:

> "Piercing the mustard seed and pouring into it the seven seas,
> Is the shortened Kural." [35]

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31. āttṛal aḻiyumentṛu antaṉarkaḷ nāṉmaṛaiyai-p pōttṛiyuriattu ēṭṭin puṛatteḻutar—ēṭṭeḻuti vallunarum vallārum vaḷḷuvanar muppalai-c collidinum attṛalcōr vintṛu. (*Tiruvaḷḷuvamālai,* 15)

32. vaḷḷuvanār ēttṛinar vaiyattu vāḻvārkaḷ uḷḷirul nīkkum viḷakku. (*Ibid*, 47)

33. cintaikkiniya cevikkiniya vāy-k-kiniya. (*Ibid,* 51)

34. veḷḷi viyāḻam viḷankiravi veṇdiṅkaḷ poḷḷena nīkkum puṛaviruḷai-t—teḷḷiya vaḷḷuvar inkuṛaḷ veṇpā akilattōr uḷḷirul nīkkum oḷi. (*Ibid,* 52)

35. kadukai-t tuḷaittēḻ kadalai-p pukaṭṭi-k kuṛukat taṛitta kuṛaḷ. (*Ibid*)

Auvaiyār goes a step further and takes us far beyond, sees the *Kuṟaḷ* minuter than the atom but perceives in it knowledge vaster than the seven seas.

> " Piercing the atom and pouring into it the
> seven seas,
> Is the shortened *Kuṟaḷ*." 36

Sundaram Pillai, philosopher and author of *Manōnmaṇīyam* sings about the *Kuṟaḷ* thus:

> " Those who have inbibed Vaḷḷuvar's Tirukkuṟaḷ faultlessly—will they ever think of a world code of ethics like those of Manu and others ?" 37

To these panegyrics may be added Dr. G. U. Pope's tribute to the *Kuṟaḷ*, who along with Ellis, Drew, Beschi and Graul disseminated the teachings of the *Kuṟaḷ* whose canvas enveloped the world with ease :

> " The *Kuṟaḷ* owes much of its popularity to its exquisite poetic form. A *Kuṟaḷ* is a couplet containing a complete and striking idea expressed in a refined and intricate metre. No translation can convey an idea of its charming effect. It is truly 'an apple of gold in a net-work of silver.' Some thing of the same kind is found in the Latin elegaic verse. There is beauty in the periodic character of the Tamil construction in many of these verses that reminds the reader of the happiest efforts of Propertius. Probably the Tamil sage adopted the best representative of the Sankrit *ślōka*........... The choice of the most difficult

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36. aṇuvai-t tuḷaittēḻ kadalai-p pukaṭṭi-k
kuṟuka-t taritta kuṟaḷ. (*Ibid*)

37. vaḷḷuvar cey tirukkuṟaḷai maṟuvaṟa nankuṇarn tōrkaḷ
uḷḷuvarō manuvāti ulakattu-k—koru nīti.

(*Manōnmaṇīyam*)

metre in the language for a long work showed that the author intended to expend upon it the utmost of power and to make it 'a possession for ever', a 'delight of many generations.' There is no trace in the *Kuṛaḷ* of many things current in South India at different periods because, I suppose, they had been eliminated from the sage's own eclectic system of faith and practice, and because his work is didactic and not controversial."[38]

38. Notes on the *Kuṛaḷ* of the Tamil poet, Tiruvaḷḷuvar by Dr. G. U. Pope, DD—*Indian Antiquary*—Sept. 1878.

CHAPTER II

IN PRAISE OF GOD

The *Kuṛaḷ* is in three parts or divisions - *Pāl* - Virtue, Wealth and Love. The first book of *Kuṛaḷ* dealing with Virtue has 38 chapters, the first four of which go to make the preface or *Pāyiram*, 20 chapters from the fifth to the twenty-fourth deal with Domestic Virtue, 13 chapters from the twenty fifth to the thirty seventh cover Ascetic Virtue and the thirty eighth chapter expatiates on Destiny. The very first chapter of the work invokes the divine blessing and the chapter itself carries the heading 'In Praise of God' (*Kadavuḷ Vāḻttu*). The first couplet of the *Kuṛaḷ* begins with the first letter 'A' and is made the name too; and the last one i e., the one thousand three hundred and thirtieth ends with the last letter of the Tamil Alphabet, the consonant 'N'.

In the preface to his commentary on the *Kuṛaḷ*, Parimēl Aḻakar writes :

> "The wise are of the considered view that four things are the essential requisites to such men as can attain positions of Indra and other gods and indestructible salvation of infinite and endless pleasure by their awareness of conduct. These are virtue, wealth, pleasure and release (salvation). Of these, as release is beyond the reach of mind and word and cannot be defined within the periphery of grammar except by way of life such as asceticism, ethical works deal only with the other three.
>
> "Of these, virtue is carrying out what has been prescribed and avoiding what has been proscribed

in Manu and other works. Those are of three kinds - Conduct, Usage and Punishment.

"Of these, conduct is that Brahmins and other castes must conform to the virtues prescribed for them such as celibacy (*brahmacharya*) and other states without deviation.

"Usage is difference arising out of separate possessive instincts on a particular thing among different persons consequently to be after it. That is in 18 states beginning from indebtedness.

"Punishment is to consider and punish according to the offence those who have swerved from the codes of conduct and usage or custom.

"Of these, as usage and punishing cannot be enforced in worldly ways or like conduct they are not lofty enough to bring good to human souls and as these are learnt not only from books but also due to comprehension and the nature of the country, omitting these, only lofty conduct has been taken by Tiruvaḷḷuvar of godly learning.

"That being in four states and there being differences among castes, leaving aside those minor special characteristics, because of the general application to all, it was said in parts, under Domestic Virtue and Ascetic Virtue. Of those, as domestic virtue is practised following the code that enunciates the state of domestic life in the company of a chaste wife, he (Tiruvaḷḷuvar), at the outset, invokes the blessing of God, so that the literary work taken on hand may culminate in good shape."

The full text of Parimēl Aḻakar's preface above has been given to enable the reader to weigh the pros and cons of his argument he or she may come across later and also because he represents a school of thought and line of thinking, irrespective of his illuminating,

masterly and scholarly commentary adding knowledge and lustre. "Parimēl Aḻakar lived and taught at Kānchi about 600 years ago. His style is almost as terse and vigorous as the original and all students of *Kuṟaḷ* are greatly indebted to him for his clear and convincing exposition of the couplets. His criticisms of the various readings current in the day are incisive and dignified."[1] While there is truth and force in what has been stated presently, one is inclined to agree with Dr. G. U. Pope that "Tiruvaḷḷuvar is generally very simple and his commentators very profound."[2]

As the commentaries of Parimēl Aḻakar and Maṇakkudavar will be quoted frequently, it is profitable to know somewhat in detail about them. To most of the foreign students of the *Kuṟaḷ*, no commentary other than that of Parimēl Aḻakar was available. It is somewhat surprising that in a language like Tamil where there was no paucity of learned commentators like Naccinārkkiniyar, Pērāciriyar and others, commentaries on the *Kuṟaḷ* are woefully lacking or missing. To the extent Parimēl Aḻakar's commentary has been handled, Maṇakkudavar's has not captured the imagination of scholars. It is now being increasingly resorted to. To quote M. S. Purnalingam Pillai, "Among the ten commentators of the far-famed *Tirukkuṟaḷ* traditionally enumerated in a single stanza, Parimēl Aḻakar and Maṇakkudavar have come out with flying colours with their commentaries. The former is well known and popular because his work came out first in the field in point of time, whatever his Vēdic bias and the latter very late in its advent has not still

1. H. A. Popley : *The Sacred Kuṟaḷ*

2. G. U. Pope : Notes on the *Kuṟaḷ* of the Tamil poet Tiruvaḷḷuvar. *Indian Antiquary* : *Sep.* 1878.

captured the imagination of the reading public though his interpretation appeals to reason and common sense and his arrangement of the couplets is more sensible and clarifying.................. Even Maṇakkudavar, however rationalistic his interpretation in most cases, cannot rise above the biasing learning of the times, and I cannot account for it otherwise in the absence of all knowledge of his birth, parentage and heritage."[3]

That Parimēl Aḻakar's commentary stands without a rival, is interspersed with quotations from Tamil classics, and written in terse Tamil have to be conceded. In each one of the commentaries on a couplet, his depth of scholarship reflecting his knowledge and intricacies of interpretation can be perceived. The many works of reference cited alone is sufficient to justify his credentials for his scholarship in diverse fields. Yet, "even rice has its husk, water its bubble and flower has its coarse stem." In some places, to conform to his tastes and wishes, he is far from impartial and deviates to give his own biased interpretation in place of simple, rational and acceptable meanings. 'The poem and its commentary must be like the vulture and its shadow' is an accepted canon. But Parimēl Aḻakar swerves from this in a number of places. In some places he distorts, in some others he sees latent meanings, in yet others he avers what are accepted Tamil moorings as of Sanskrit origin. As such, students of the *Kuṛaḷ* have to spot out what really are the ideas contained in the couplets as those of the author different from those of Parimēl Aḻakar.[4]

To put matters on an even keel the views of V. V. S. Aiyar may be taken into account : "Nine

3. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai : *The Kuṛaḷ in English.*

4. R. P. Setu Pillai : *Tiruvaḷḷuvar Nūl Nayam.*

commentators had interpreted the *Kuṛaḷ* before Parimēl Aḻakar. But it was reserved for him alone to enter into the very mind of the author as it were, and bring out every beauty and thought that lie imbedded in the original. But for his commentary none in modern days could understand the full significance of the original verses. His commentary is as terse and vigorous as the *Kuṛaḷ* itself in point of style. The reasonings by which he condemns readings and renderings other than his own, are a study in sharp, incisive, logical and dignified criticism."[5]

One must not fail to take note of two things underlined by Parimēl Aḻakar—(1) only lofty conduct has been taken as virtue by Tiruvaḷḷuvar and (2) because of the general application to all, it was quoted in two parts under (i) domestic virtue and (ii) ascetic virtue. *Tirukkuṛaḷ* excels as an ethical work predominantly because of its universal application to man where laboured thinking, intricate reasoning and dialecticism do not have scope and man is treated as man with respect and dignity. It steers clear of shibboleths, prejudices, injustices, controversies and toes the line that is straight, unambiguous and embraces all humanity, transcending barriers of race and colour, caste and creed. It is because of the agreable ethical code propounded by the *Kuṛaḷ* that men of all persuasions and diverse political philosophies aspire and attempt to create a meeting ground with it. It can be derived from this that for centuries since the *Kuṛaḷ* was written, the idea, that to associate with the tenets of the *Kuṛaḷ* is to align with what is noble and just, has stood the ground. The same gained momentum and with the passage of time, it has been proved beyond doubt that no book in the

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5. V. V. S. Aiyar: The *Kuṛaḷ* or *The Maxims of Tiruvaḷḷuvar.*

world is so very much acceptable to the bulk of the human race as the *Kuṟaḷ*, whether before or after its appearance.

I

akara mutala eḻuttellām āti
pakavan mutattṟē ulaku. (1)

" A ", the alphabets all begin with;
The world beginneth with the eternal God as Chief. (1)

Tiruvaḷḷuvar begins his work by telling us about the Adorable Being from whom all creation flowed. He uses a simile; he dwells upon a visible thing to expound about the Invisible Being men have not seen. The word "world" in the couplet stands for souls inhabiting it. It is common knowledge that the alphabets of the languages the world over begin with 'A'. Even so, Parimēl Aḻakar comments that "as not only for Tamil but also for the northern language, (meaning Sanskrit) 'A' is the first letter, he used the words 'the alphabets all'." 'A' is the prime letter in the alphabets from which not only the consonants are formed but also the other vowels expanded. To be explicit, the other vowels are but an extension of 'A'. 'A' is the first letter in the alphabet to which all the other letters owe their existence. In the same way, the Adorable One is the Primal Lord. Just as the source for the other letters, expanding into phrases, and further developing into variegated arts, is 'A' in the same pattern from out of the Primal Lord have come the five senses—sound, perception, light, taste and smell, expanding into the five elements—space, air, fire, water and earth and further taking shape into two types as plant and animal life and engulfing the entire universe inhabited by these.

" Among the letters I am 'A'," says Krishna to Arjuna.[6] The very first Sūtra in the earliest extant Tamil grammar, *Tolkāppiyam* delineates that "the letters are said to be thirty with 'A' as the first and 'Na' as the last."[7] In Tāyumānavar's 'Obeisance to the Infinite'—*Poruḷ vaṇakkam*—occurs the line: "As the vowel 'A' is in all letters and different from all."[8] More can be multiplied. Innumerable expositions of the importance of the letter 'A' can be cited from the wide range of Tamil literature following the lead given by the *Kuṛaḷ*. The first couplet in the *Kuṛaḷ* has induced poeple to ponder and the versatile Dr. G. U. Pope, perhaps not content with his own rendering of the couplet says: "The very learned Ellis translated the couplet thus:

"'A' ranked in every alphabet the first,
The self same vowel stands; so in all worlds,
Th' eternal God is Chief."[9]

Pope himself translates the first *Kuṛaḷ* as under.

'A' as its first of letters, every speech maintains;
The 'Primal Deity' is First through all the world's domains."[10]

W. H. Drew translates the couplet as follows:

" As all letters have the letter 'A' for their first, so the world has the eternal God for its first."[11]

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6. *Bhagavad Gīta*, *X*, 33.
7. eḻuttena-p padupa
akara mutal
nakara iruvāy muppahtenpa.
(*Tolkāppiyam*: *Eḻuttatikāram*, 1)
8. akaravuyir eḻuttanaittumāki verāy.
(*Tāyumanāvar Pādalkaḷ-Poruḷ vaṇakkam*)
9. F. W. Ellis: *Aṛappāl*.
10. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār*.
11. W. H. Drew: *An English Translation of the Kuṛaḷ*.

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:—

> " All letters have 'A' as their first; the world
> has as first the Eternal Adorable One."

The English rendering of the Latin translation of the first couplet by Beschi is also given:

> " All the letters have 'A' as the head.
> The world has God as its head." [12]

The sum and substance of the first couplet is that God is at the helm of everything in the universe, to whatever species it may belong.

II

In the second couplet, Tiruvaḷḷuvar expands the base that he built in the first one. Letters go to make ultimately the storehouse of all learning contained in books and the acquisition of knowledge may lead one both to salvation and ruin. Knowledge gathered from books, if properly harnessed, will bring immense good and prosperity both to the giver and the recipient. There is nothing more dangerous than pride in knowledge which brings in its wake conceitedness and pitfalls. What is one's learning, knowledge and wisdom worth, if one refrains from worshipping the Lord, the very embodiment of these?

> *kattṛatanāl āya payan en kol vālaṛivan*
> *nattṛāḷ toḻāar enin.* (2)

> Of what use is learning, if the learned refrain
> From worshipping at the feet of the Lord,
> Who is Wisdom Immaculate ? (2)

Learning itself is for realising God who is Knowledge personified. The author underlines three

12. C. J. Beschi's Latin Commentary of *Tirukkuṛaḷ.*

ideas in this couplet—(1) the proper use of learning, (2) the projection of God as immaculate Wisdom and (3) making oneself worthy of God's grace by worshipping him. Whatever be one's learning and attainments, one is unworthy of God's grace, if one's mind detracts away from him. Another noteworthy point that may escape attention is that the expressions in the couplet "the feet of the Lord" and "the Lord as immaculate Wisdom" are seemingly contradictory, but are not in reality so. The former means only the grace of God which is as abstract as the latter. Worshipping at the altar of Wisdom and making oneself worthy of God's grace is emphasised. Otherwise, learning is of no use and there is little difference between the books and men possessing knowledge. Such men are in no way different from containers. To whom else can we go but to Sivavākkiyar who pungently declares: "Will the burnt utensil in cooking ever relish the taste of the food?"[13]

Pope translates the couplet thus:

"No fruit have men of all their studied lore,
Save they the 'Purely Wise One's feet adore."

Elaborating the term 'Purely Wise One' Pope says. "His knowledge is of the actual, not tinged by any medium of transmission, immediately his own.".[14]

Pope has literally translated the coupet as follows:

"If men worship not the feet of Him who is pure knowledge, what benfit accrues from that which one has learned?"

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13. cuṭṭa caṭṭi caṭṭuvam kariccuvai ariyumō. (*Sivavākkiyarpādalkaḷ*)

14. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

Ellis' rendering runs as under:

> "What is the fruit that human knowledge gives,
> If at the feet of Him who is pure knowledge
> Due deference be not paid?"

He says that "the terms used to designate the Deity, vālaṟivan—He who is pure intelligence has immediate reference to Ādi pakavan-the eternal God in the preceding distich"[15]

Parimēl Aḻakar explains that the author calls the feet of the Lord as 'good feet', as the same are 'the panacea for the disease of birth.' He adds, "It is said by this that the effect of acquisition of knowledge is to worship Him and snap births."

Maṉakkudavar writes thus: "As sense is perceived from word, truth is perceived by learning it and salvation attained. To those who question, 'why then worship again?,' it is said, 'The effect of that is this: There is no different effect'."

Beschi frames a question to the listener opposite and tells him to worship the feet of Him of pure knowledge in his rendering of the couplet.

> "What does it profit, friend, to have learnt much unless you worship the good feet of Him who has pure knowledge i.e., knowledge that is free from all error?"[16]

Along with Beschi, W. H. Drew takes God as the possessor of pure knowledge:

> "What profit have those derived from learning, who worship not the good feet of Him who is possessed of pure knowledge."[17]

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15. F. W. Ellis: *Aṟappāl.*
16. C. J. Beschi's Latin Commentary of *Tirukkuṟaḷ.*
17. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṟaḷ.*

In the next four couplets Tiruvaḷḷuvar tells about those attaining salvation by enshrining Him in their bosom, singing His praise and treading His path.

III

malarmicai ēkinān māṇadi cērntār
nilamicai nīduvāḻ vār. (3)

Those united to the majestic feet of Him
Who walked on flowers,
Will live long in the world. (3)

God who is the Lord of Mercy abides in the hearts of the faithful who pine for Him. Their hearts are the lotuses towards which He hastens to make them His living apartment. Devotees who have taken refuge in the feet of the Almighty that is majesty will live long in the world and remember Him ever and anon with piety and love. The couplet in literal translation reads: "Those united with the glorious foot of Him who reached to the top of the full blown flower shall live long".

Ellis renders the couplet as follows:

"Those who adore His sacred feet, whose grace,
Gladdens with sudden thrill the fervent heart
High over the earth shall soar to endless joy".

Expressing his inability to translate the couplet he observes: "The allusion in the original could not by any form of words be preserved so as to be intelligible to the European reader, in this version therefore, the commentary rather than the text is followed". The passage interpreted by Parimēl Aḻakar and translated by Ellis reads. "He who passes suddenly over the lotus flower of the heart of those who think on him with affection appearing to their mind's eye in that form in which their several systems of religious belief lead their imagination to

represent Him. There are some who apply this expression, *malar micai ēkinān*—He who walked to the top of the full blown flower to another deity who they denominated *pumē nadantār*—He who walks on flowers."[18]

Maṇakkudavar gives the meaning of the couplet that only those who are united to the feet of the Lord, who walked on the flowers will live long in this world. He adds that as the author has said 'earth' (world) in general, it will be taken to include 'in this world' and 'in the higher world.'

Pope's rendering of the couplet runs as under:

> "His feet, 'who o'er the full-blown flower hath
> past' who gain,
> In bliss long time shall dwell above this
> earthly plain."[19]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> "Those who have clung to the august feet of Him who has passed over the flower, shall live long above the earth."

The following is an extract from his note on the couplet:

> "The Jain deity Arugan is represented as standing on a lotus flower. Perhaps the main idea here is the Omnipresence of the Deity (Psa. CXXXIX). It is a poet—a true poet that speaks, and he seems to say: 'It is the foot-fall of God that makes His creation rejoice and put forth its flowers as it rests on each "Spirit's folded bloom."......... The poet wanders in shadowy thoroughfares of thought and tells of his visions as they appear. There is a mania for classification, as if human

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18. F. W. Ellis: *Aṛappāl.*
19. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

souls—especially the souls of the poets, to whom God has given the vision and the faculty divine—could all be arranged in genus and species like so many shells!

"Our poet seizes upon each form and phrase that has anything of truth and beauty; but the life he breathes into it is his own; The harp may be the old one of 'ten strings'; the song is a new song."

Beschi gives a literal translation of the couplet and translates 'malarmicai', as 'the higher land.' He takes 'walked over flowers' to mean endowing beauty to the flowers created by God over which He walks. The English rendering of the Latin translation is as follows:

"He who adheres to the venerable feet of Him who walks over the flowers, will live long in the higher land."[20]

What follows is perhaps his commentary. "He who worships Him who gives beauty to the flowers will be eternally happy in heaven."[21] This is an entirely different but wonderful meaning read in the couplet unlike in other commentaries. Paritiyār says that those who keep in mind the sacred feet of Sivan who stands on the flowers offered by devotees shall enjoy all comforts. Beschi is partially in company with Paritiyār. But with regard to endowing beauty to nature by God, one of the verses of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār giving the idea of God bestowing the red hue to fire is worthy of comparison, with the interpretation of Beschi. Ammaiyār asks of the Divine Dancer:

"Is it because that you are playing with fire,
Your palm has become reddish?

20. C. J. Beschi's Latin Commentary of *Tirukkuṟaḷ*.
21. Ibid.

Or is it because of the beauty of your palm
That fire got its red hue ?"[22]

W. H. Drew renders the couplet thus :

"Those who are united to the glorious feet of Him who occupies swiftly the flower of the mind, shall flourish."[23]

This couplet is quoted by Jains to emphasise the importance of worshipping the feet that walked over the Divine Lotus. Those adoring the feet of Aruhan have a chance of attaining salvation and according to Jaina tradition, those attaining salvation or realising the perfect self would become Siddhas abiding at the top of the Cosmos.

Why this couplet is made complex is really puzzling. God is easy of approach for a simple soul. The hearts of the faithful with single minded devotion become the abode of God. The body is His living apartment where His lotus feet rest. There is a magnificent verse in the Tiruvācakam wherein is a description of God making the heart of his devotee his home.

* "He hath increased light, hath darkness banished,
For age cut off affliction clinging bond, and light
Of love hath given,—the Lord of Perun-turai great,
Well pleased to make my heart his home!"[24]

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* G. U. Pope's translation

22. a̲lalāda aṅkai civantatō aṅkai
a̲lakāl a̲lal civantavarō.
(Eleventh *Tirumuṛai*, *Aṛputa-t-tiruvantāti*)

23. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ*.

24. inpam perukki iruḷakattṟi eññāntṟum
tuṇpam todarvaṟuttu-c-cōtiyāy—anpamaittu-c
cīrār perunturaiyān en cintaiyē
ūrakak kondān uvantu. (*Tiruvācakam*)

IV

vēṇdutalvēṇ dāmai ilānadi cērntārkku
yāṇdum idumpai ila. (4)

On those who have surrendered themselves at the
feet of Him
Of neither attachment nor aversion, no evil shall
ever befall. (4)

No evil or disaster will ever befall on those who have arrived at the lotus feet of the Lord wedded neither to attachment nor aversion. No grief will afflict such men who adore the feet of the Ever Merciful Being beyond the pale of desires or hate.

Parimēl Aḻakar gives the meaning of the couplet that "to those who reached the feet of Him who neither wish nor shun a thing, there will not be the sorrows of birth at any time." He classifies such sorrows as those from oneself, those from others and those from God. To those who have reached the feet of the Lord, the ills from these can no longer be there.

Ellis translates the couplet as under:

"To Him whom no affection moves nor hate,
Those constant in obedience, from all ill
In this world and the next are free."[25]

Pope's translation is as follows:

"His foot, 'Whom want affects not, irks not grief' who gain
Shall not through everytime, of any woes complain."[26]

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25. F. W. Ellis: *Aṛappāl.*
26. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār*

He also gives a literal translation of the couplet. "Sorrow assails never those who have drawn nigh to the feet of Him who is free from desire and aversion."[27] He amplifies further: "He desires not, for there is not want to be supplied. He has no aversion, for nothing can enter the sphere of His being that troubles."[28]

Maṇakkudavar takes the couplet to mean that there will not be any sorrow from any source to those united to the feet of the Lord of neither pleasure nor anger. Beschi's translation falls in line with that of Maṇakkudavar in the later part.

> "He who adheres to the feet of Him in whom desires and aversion have no place will be free for ever from the evils of this world."[29]

W. H. Drew in translating this couplet follows also Maṇakkudavar:

> "To those who meditate the feet of Him who is void of desire or aversion, evil shall never come."[30]

V

iruḷcēr iruvinaiyum cēra iṟaivan
poruḷcēr pukaḻpurintār māṭṭu. (5)

The twin action of enveloping darkness will not afflict those
Who uniterruptedly sing the meaningful praise of the Lord. (5)

Parimēl Aḻakar interprets: "The author calls that mental delusion which arises from matter, the

27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. C. J. Beschi's Latin Commentary of *Tirukkuṟaḷ*.
30. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṟaḷ*.

nature of which no one can explain, darkness and as good works are the cause of mortal births, he says the effect of both good and bad works ceases. The praises addressed by the ignorant to beings whom they imagine to be deities, but who possess none of the qualities of the divine nature, not being founded in reality it is here said that the praise of the Lord, who possesses all these qualities is the praise of reality". The commentators, one and all, speak about good and bad deeds, as either brings to the souls higher and lower births. A meaningful praise of the Lord, which is only real praise will not bring the reward of good deeds, which also cause births. The positive result is the immunity from the enjoyment flowing from the results of good deeds. Those who sing the praise of God are a separate category by themselves, whom evil from any quarter cannot assail, as at all times their minds are attuned Godward.

Pope translates the couplet as follows:

> "The men, who on the 'King's' true praise delight to dwell,
> Affects not them the fruit of deeds ill or well."[31]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> "The two kinds of action, to which darkness belongs, approach not him who has with desire shown forth the true praises of the King."

Two kinds of action, good deeds as well as evil ones, are enveloped in darkness, due to ignorance. 'Praise' is qualified by the word, *true* since men define God and praise Him erroneously. Pope, in his notes, further observes :—" The devout are those who desire the praise—who with hearty desire offer praise—

31. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār*

'which is connected with reality'. This may mean true notions of God of a true and sincere mind. It is the worship in spirit and truth of a greater Master".[32]

W. H. Drew translates the couplet thus :

> "The two-fold deeds that spring from darkness shall not adhere to those who delight in the true praise of God."[33]

Ellis' translation is amplificatory of the couplet :

> "Those who delight with fervent mind to praise
> The true and only Lord of heaven and earth
> No false ideas of right and wrong can cloud." [34]

The word used to denote God in the couplet is *iṛaivan*, derived from the root *iṛu* meaning 'to settle', 'to percolate.' *Iṛaivan* thus means, He who settles or percolates over everything in universe, the ever and every where present Lord, in short Lord. Ellis expresses the view that "the word used to designate the Deity is *iṛaivan* which means a lord, a prince, definitely the Lord, God the two latter terms are not expressed, but clearly implied." [35]

Beschi throws light on the couplet from a different angle. Good and bad deeds are done due to a false understanding. But the intention is good which is praise interminably linked with the desire for a true knowledge of God. Such a person is not affected as a consequence of his deeds, good or evil. He renders the couplet thus :

> "Evil works mixed with good, which the false understanding of things bring about, will not

32. Ibid.
33. W. H. Drew : An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ*.
34. Ellis: *Aṛappāl*.
35. Ibid.

cling to him who desires praise connected with the true knowledge of God."[36]

He explains that "he who has true notion of God will correct many false ideas from which evil works generally follow and will select only what is Good."[37] This in effect means that false ideas due to ignorance are corrected by the doer himself who discriminates good from evil, as he sings the praise of God.

VI

poṟivāyil aintavittān poytīr oḻukka
neṟinintṟār nīduvaḻ vār. (6)

Those conforming to the path, rightous and free from falsehood,
Of Him who destroys the five, flowing from the organs will live for ever. (6)

As the senses are five flowing from the five organs the body, mouth, eye, nose and ear, desires are five-fold. God is beyond afflictions by these and those who stick to the path of virtue bereft of evil, will live long. An Old Commentary qualifies this by the addition of the words "in this world and the next."

Ellis' translation is based on the meaning and commentary of Parimēl Aḻakar.

"Those who pursue the path of his true law
Who is of sensual organs void, in Heaven
Shall dwell in never-ending bliss."[38]

Translating the couplet,

"Long live they blest, who've stood in path from falsehood freed;

36. C. J. Beschi's Latin Commentary of *Tirukkuṟal.*
37. Ibid.
38. Ellis: *Aṟappāl.*

His, who quenched lusts, that from the sense-gates five proceed,"

Pope refers to the Jain deity of Arugan called Cinēndra - 'lord of wrath' and says that "it may be extinguished in others the fires of sensual passion with reference to destroying the five senses"[39]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

"Those who have stood firmly in the path of virtue free from falsehood, which is the path of Him who has extinguished the five whose gates are the organs of sense shall live long in prosperity."

Beschi in his rendering first mentions who the virtuous are and also the 'right path' as the doctrine of God free of the five-fold desires entering by the senses.

"He who does not go away from the right path not liable to error i.e., from the doctrine of Him who is free of five affections that are accustomed to enter the mind by way of the five senses will be happy for ever."[40]

W. H. Drew has translated the couplet as under:

"Those shall long prosper who abide in the faultless way of Him who has destroyed the five desires of the senses."[41]

VII

In the next three couplets, Tiruvaḷḷuvar enumerates the disadvantages accruing to those who refrain from cherishing the Lord in their bosom, singing His

39. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyānar.*
40. C. J. Beschi's Latin Commentary of *Tirukkuṛaḷ.*
41. W. H. Drew An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ.*

praise and worshipping Him. Mental agonies cannot be obliterated but by taking refuge at the lotus feet of Him for whom there is no comparison by any means. It is derived by inference that those who do not take refuge in His feet are subjected to sufferings inflicted on them because of the many births, according to Parimēl Aḻakar. Maṇakkudavur says that sorrow can only be dispensed with by attaining that state in which there is neither death nor birth, free from good or evil. God is simple enough and is neither complex nor complicated to the faithful. To those who cherish and attain His lotus feet by their devotion to Him it is but easy to escape from sorrow. In other words, those taking refuge at the feet of the Lord get mental peace.

tanakkuvamai illātān taḷcērntar-k kallāl
manakkavalai māttṛal aritu. (7)

Except to those who take refuge
At the feet of Him beyond any comparison
It is difficult to be rid of mental sorrow. (7)

The mind is at peace, unruffled and immune to external pressure, when refuge is taken at the feet of the Lord. There is nothing on earth or beyond the seven seas that has the likeness of Him and the incomparable Lord bestows tranquillity by ridding the agonising mind of sorrow. Mental peace is there for the mere asking and the Lord God beckons the faithful to draw closer to Him. Dr. G. U. Pope translates this couplet thus :

"Unless His foot, 'to whom none can campare,' men gain,
'Tis hard for mind to find relief from anxious pain"[42]

42. G. U. Pope; *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> "Hard is it to relieve the heart-felt anxieties of any save of those who have clung to the feet of Him to whom there is none like."

Rev. W. H. Drew describes the mental anguish as 'anxiety of mind', and his translation of the couplet runs as follows:

> "Anxiety of mind cannot be removed, except from those who are united to the feet of Him who is without likeness." [43]

The sharp intellect of Ellis has given out, though not an exact translation, a fine exposition of this couplet, which is more than compensating. Ellis renders the couplet thus:

> "The anxious mind against corroding thought,
> No refuge hath, save at the sacred feet,
> Of Him to whom no likeness is." [44]

The care, sorrow or anguish that gathers like a storm in the mind will thrive and prosper unless one surrenders at the feet of the Lord. The same is done away with when refuge is taken at the Lord's feet. The three renderings in English of this couplet by Pope, Drew and Ellis are helpful to have a clear idea and bring into focus the full implication which Tiruvaḷḷuvar has in mind. Ellis, in particular, has gone far enough to bring us nearer the author of the *Kuṛaḷ* by appropriately interpreting that the anxious mind hath no refuge against corroding thought save at the sacred feet of God. The translators on their part, to be as faithful and close to the author, have indirectly and unknowingly given some of the finest expositions

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43. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ*.
44. F. W. Ellis: *Aṛappāl*.

of several couplets in the *Kuṟaḷ*. In a way the numerous English and other translations in European languages have been of real assistance in understanding the *Kuṟaḷ* better, because it has to be conceded that they come from unbiased and detached minds.

The English rendering of Beschi's Latin translation of the couplet is as follows:

> "Unless you adhere to the feet of Him who has no likeness to Himself, it will be difficult to quieten the anxiety of mind."[45]

Ellis points out a small correction to be made in the Latin translation of Beschi. There is not only a likeness of Him, but no similitude also can be found, as the author of the *Kuṟaḷ* uses the word *uvamai*, similitude. Ellis writes: "The Latin commentary renders the original '*qui sibi similem non habet*' but as *uvamai* is an abstract noun, it ought to be '*qui sibi similitudinum non habet*'."[46] The author says not merely that there is none like the deity, but that there is no similitude by which he can be described, no figure of human speech by which his nature can be expressed.

VIII

aṟavāḻi antaṉan tālcērntark kallāl
piṟavaḻi nīntal aritu. (8)

Except to those who take refuge
At the feet of the Virutuous Lord
It is difficult to swim across the other sea. (8)

To Him there is no comparison. He is the Sea of Virtue. Unless we cling to the Lord, who is the Sea

45. C. J. Beschi's Latin Commentary of *Tirukkuṟaḷ*.
46. F. W. Ellis: *Aṟappāl*.

of Virtue, it is difficult for us to cross the other sea, i.e., the sea of vice.

The 'other sea' has been taken as the sea of wealth and the sea of happiness by Parimēl Aḻakar and Maṇakkudavar, the other two divisions dealt with in the *Kuṛaḷ*. But Paritiyār has taken the 'other sea' as the 'sea of sin'. Ellis and Drew have taken 'the other sea' to be the 'sea of vice,' distinct and different from the 'sea of virtue'. It is on the sinner, the imperfect, the weak, the down-trodden and the suppressed in society that the Lord showers His bountiful mercy. When one of the disciples of Jesus said unto him, 'Lord, teach us to pray' he gave them the prayer which included the following:

> "Forgive us our sins: for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil"[47]

The Peerless Lord is described as the Virtuous Lord who is the Sea of Virtue. Tiruvaḷḷuvar later defines *antaṇar* as those that are addicted to virtue. God is the *Antaṇan*, the Virtuous Lord, the bubbling Ocean of Righteousness. It was for emphasising the virtuous quality of God that Tiruvaḷḷuvar uses a second word meaning 'virtue' in the same phrase.

The phrase used by Tiruvaḷḷuvar for God in this couplet is '*Aravāḻi Antaṇan.*' '*Aravāḻi*' has been taken by all the commentators as the 'sea of virtue', but some attribute the meaning of 'wheel' to '*āḻi*' and give the meaning to the phrase as a whole as 'the wheel of virtue' and hence denotes the God of a particular denomination. This is far fetched and Tiruvaḷḷuvar, of all the persons on earth, would have

47. New Testament: St. Luke, XI-4.

liked God only to be universal and not denominational.

Translations of Ellis, Drew, Pope and Beschi are given below:

"Hard is the transit of this sea of vice,
Save by that Being's gracious aid, who is
Himself a sea of virtue."[48] (Ellis)

"None can swim the sea of vice, but those who are united to the feet of that gracious Being who is a sea of virtue."[49] (Drew)

"Unless his feet, 'the Sea of Good, the fair and
Bountiful,' men gain
'Tis hard the further bank of being's changeful
sea to attain."[50] (Pope)

"Unless you adhere to the feet of Him who is the sea of virtue, it will be difficult to cross the other sea that is outside it (namely this sea of misery). (Beschi)[51]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

"Hard is it to swim the other sea (of this evil world) unless you cling to the foot of Him who is the good and gracious sea of virtue."

IX

kōḷil poṟiyiṟ kuṇamilāvē eṇkuṇattāṉ
tāḷai vaṇaṅkāt talai. (9)

The head that does not bow down
At the feet of Him of cherishable attributes
Is like the senses without sensation. (9)

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48. F. W. Ellis: *Aṟappāl.*
49. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṟal.*
50. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṟaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*
51. C. J. Beschi's Latin Commentary of *Tirukkuṟal.*

The head must bow down in worship at the feet of the Lord whose attributes are for the mind to ponder and cherish. Otherwise, there is not much to choose between the head and the senses without sensation.

In this couplet too, the commentators have all brought into play their denominationalism and would like to depict Tiruvaḷḷuvar's God as the God of a few. '*Eṇ kuṇattāṉ*' is the phrase, Tiruvḷḷuvar has used to indicate God. '*Eṇ*' means both 'cherishable' and 'eight'. Except for Kālinkar, other commentators including the versatile Parimēl Aḻakar, have taken the phrase to mean, 'He of eight attributes'. Kālinkar interprets it to mean the 'Lord of cherishable attributes'.

What are the eight attributes of God? "The eight attributes are: (1) Self-existence, (2) Pure essence. (3) Intuitive knowledge, (4) Omniscience, (5) Freedom from evil, (6) Graciousness, (7) Omnipotence and (8) Infinite bliss. Thus it has been told in the Saivāgamas" says Parimēl Aḻakar. The eight qualities are catogorised, according to Jainism, as (1) Infinite knowledge, (2) Infinite vision, (3) Infinite energy, (4) Infinite joy, (5) Indescribability, (6) Beginninglessness, (7) Agelessness and (8) Deathlessness. It is neither fair to Tiruvaḷḷuvar nor to his universalism to restrict his vision within the frontiers of certain dogmas and sectarian beliefs. God's magnanimity and infinite grace cannot be measured nor made to keep within certain boundaries. His qualities cannot be counted nor enumerated and are infinite and beyond any limitation or measurements as has been conceded by persons of different denominations and faiths. God's qualities are to be treasured and cherished in the mind. If the head or any other limb of the body does not press itself to the service of God, it is like the senses that have lost their characteristic

qualities of sensation. If the eyes cannot see nor can the nose smell, what are they but pieces of adornment? A doll resembling a man has eyes, ears and nose. What use can these be put to? God's infinite mercy and qualities cannot be fathomed. What else can man do but to think of God's generosity and bounty, magnanimity, graciousness and other qualities that cannot be listed? And what else is life for him save to bend his head in obeisance to God?

English renderings of Pope, Ellis and Drew as also the translation of the Latin rendering of Beschi are given below:

"Before His feet, 'The Eight fold Excellence', with unbent head,
Who stands, like palsied sense, is to all living functions dead.[52] (Pope)

"Of virtue void, as is the palsied sense,
The head must be, that bows not at his feet,
Whose eight fold attributes pervade the world.[53] (Ellis)

"The head that worships not the feet of Him who is possessed of eight attributes, is profit less as a sense without the power of sensation."[54] (Drew)

"There is no use in the head that does not remember,
God exactly like the sense that does not perceive its object."[55] (Beschi)

Beschi adds an explanatory sentence that "the head not bowing before God, is like the blind eye, deaf ear."

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52. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanaṛ.*
53. F. W. Ellis: *Aṛappāl.*
54. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ.*
55. C. J. Beschi's Latin Commentary of *Tirukkuṛaḷ.*

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> "The head of the men who bows not before the foot of Him who has the eight qualities, is void of all (good) qualities, like organs of sense devoid of the power of sensation."

X

The Chapter on God ends with the couplet that speaks about the capacity of those that are able to swim the ocean of birth by clinging to the feet of the Lord and emphatically puts down in the negative that those who do not surrender at His feet cannot swim. Parimēl Aḻakar says that the author calls it the ocean of birth, as the same occurs in an unending series of cause and effect. To such of those not keeping in mind the worldly nature but only pining for the Lord's feet, there is an end to future births and to those thinking differently there will be no end to births. That the souls take many births has been accepted by all schools of thought in Hindu philosophy.

> "The six Brahmanical systems of thought viz., the Nyaya, the Vaisesika, the Samkhya, the Yoga, the Purva Mamamsa and the Uttara Mimamsa agree on certain essentials. The systems believe in rebirth and pre-existence. Our life is a step on a road, the direction and goal of which are lost in the infinite. On this road, death is never an end or an obstacle but at most the beginning of new steps. The development of the soul is a continuous process, though it is broken into stages by the recurring baptism of death." [56]

56. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan: *Indian Philosophy*.

Māṇikkavāsakar enumerates a long list of births he took and got tired :

* " Grass was I, shrub was I, worm, tree,
Full many a kind of beast, bird, snake,
Stone, man, and demon 'Midst Thy hosts I served.
The form of mighty Asuras, ascetics, Gods I bore,
Within these immobile forms of life,
In every species born, weary have I grown great Lord !"[57]

The *Bhagavad Gīta* talks about the many births one takes. Krishna says to Arjuna :

" You and I have gone through many births ;
You know them not, I know them all !"[58]

The *Kuṛaḷ* says :

piṛavip peruṅkadal nīntuvar nīntār
iṛaivan adicēra tār. (10)

Swim (they) will the ocean of birth ; swim will not those
That do not adhere to the Lord's feet. (10)

While there is a definite subject in the later part of the couplet, i.e. ' those that do not adhere to the Lord's feet, subject in the first part is absent and is derived only by implication. By this absence, the essence of the emphasis of the positive act of swimming across the ocean of birth has been brought about admirably. The word 'birth' has been used by Tiruvḷḷuvar only in the singular. As a common noun in singular usage denates the species it belongs to, here the word 'birth' has been taken to mean the many

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* Dr. G. U. Pope's Translation.

57. *Tiruvācakam, I–Sivapurāṇam.*

58. *The Bhagavad Gīta*—IV, 5.

births by all the commentators. English translations of Pope, Drew and Ellis have also trodden the beaten track. 'Birth' here means only life and only those that are united to the feet of the Lord will be able to cross the ocean of life and reach the other shore. A life of dedication and service in the cause of humanity is an achievement and the ocean of life is crossed with ease by those united to the feet of God. Obstacles and impediments there are many in life for doing good acts. Selfishness and one's own enjoyment get a preference to selflessness and the good of others. Faith in God is not different from faith in humanity. With the good of the many rankling in the breast, those having implicit faith in God will cross the ocean of life by their service to humanity, always being alert not to get drowned. The others cannot swim across, which means they will fall a prey to their own self-seeking ambitions and pursuits after being goaded by them. Tiruvaḷḷuvar underlines the benefit accruing to those who are united to the feet of the Lord in the life herein, instead of in the life hereafter, as is generally interpreted.

The renderings of the couplet by Pope, Ellis and Drew are given below:

"They swim the sea of births, the 'Monarch's' foot who gain
None others reach the shore of being's mighty main."[59] (Pope)

"Of those who swim the wide extended sea
Of mortal birth, none ever can escape,
But they who to the feet of God adhere."[60] (Ellis)

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59. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār*
60. F. W. Ellis: *Arappāl.*

> "None can swim the great sea of birth, but those who are united to the feet of God."[61] (Drew)

Pope translates the word '*iṛaivan*' into 'King' and 'Monarch.' God's authority percolates and so does the king's. While the latter rules over his realm, the former is the King of all realms.

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> "They shall swim over the vast sea of birth, who have clung to the foot of the king: no others shall do so."

Those who are born and are swimming the ocean of life, will not be able to swim through unless they are united to the feet of the Lord. Birth, as indicated earlier, has been taken to be life and Beschi does not envisage two types of people. He renders the couplet as under:

> "Those who do not adhere to the feet of God will not swim this vast sea of miseries in which we are born in order to swim it."[62]

Beschi does not take the couplet to contain two sentences, but instead takes it as one. What Beschi wants to convey may be said thus: Those swimming the birth of miseries (*piṛavip peruṅkadal nīntuvar*) will not (be able to) swim (*nīntār*)who do not adhere to the feet of God (*iṛaivan adi cēratār.*)

How wonderfully Nammāḻvār, the foremost saint poet of the followers of Śri Vaiṣnavism, who very greatly influenced Rāmānuja in his thoughts and writings bring out this idea in a verse, the gem of a piece!

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61. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ.*
62. C. J. Beschi's Latin commentary of *Tirukkuṛaḷ.*

" Who but He possesses the highest virtue with
nothing higher ?
Who but He bestows comprehension of the mind
dispelling darkness ?
Who but He is the Lord of gods worshipping Him,
free from all affliction ?
The resplendent feet of Him, O my heart! Bow
down and worship !
They cut off the miseries of the world."[63]

Among the trinity who ruled with distinction the kingdom of philosophy beneath the bewitching sky of Greece during the centuries before Christ, "It was Plato who was most alive to the moral implications of the immortality of the soul. The vision of Er in the *Republic* seeks to describe the journey of Er after death and his sojourn before his rebirth on earth again after he had enjoyed the fruits of his deeds in his earlier birth. There is a continuity in this series of lives, but the circumstances of it is lost through quaffing the waters of unmindfulness."[64] The theory of the transmigration of the soul traversing the gamut of cycle of births is conspicuously prominent in most of the eastern philosophies. The process of births and deaths interminably long as days following nights in the chain reaction has been taken to be a veritable ocean which those who have taken to the feet of the Lord splash across once and for ever and block the passage of future births for all time to come.

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63. uyarvu aṛa uyar nalam udaiyavan evan avan
mayarvu aṛa mati nalam aruḷinan evan avan
ayarvu aṛum amararkaḷ atipati evan avan
tuyar aṛu cudar adi toḻutu eḻu en mananē.

(*Tiruvāymoḻi*, 1—1)

64. A. R. Wadia : *Socrates, Plato and Aristotle-History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western.*

Tiruvaḷḷuvar believed in the theory of more than one birth the soul takes. But this is not the place where he has expressed the view. He deals with the present life following one's birth and the word 'birth' is a synonym of life here. To Tiruvaḷḷuvar cannot be ascribed the philosophy that life is a drudgery and an ocean of sorrow. He takes a look at man with a positive eye emphasising a life of affirmation. He does not take kindly to negation of life as a philosophy, code of conduct or view of life. As opposed to him, it is contended that " concrete life of *samsāra* consisting of a series of births and deaths is compared to an ocean. This ocean of life is generally associated with suffering. '*Samsāram sāgaram dukham*' is an indication of this general principle which is common to all Indian systém of metaphysics ". [65] Whatever be the enunciation here, it can be said categorically that the *Kuṛaḷ* as a work does not subscribe to the theory of life as a misery.

G. U. Pope lists the epithets applied to God in this chapter and says that they are varied and instructive. These are: " The eternal (first) adorable one (1), He who hath pure knowledge (2) He who hath moved (as a breath of air) over the flower of the expanded soul (3), He to whom is neither desires nor aversion (4), The Lord (5), He who has destroyed the gates of the five senses (6), He to whom no likeness is (7), the Ocean of virtue, beautiful and gracious one (8), He who possesses the eight qualities " (9). There is not much of a variation between those given by Pope and the translations given herein except those given for the third and the ninth couplets. The epithets are: " The eternal God as chief (1), the Lord who is wisdom immaculate (2), He who abides in the hearts

65. A Chakravarti: *Tirukkuṛaḷ.*

of the faithful (3), He of neither attachement nor aversion (4), The Lord (5), He who is beyond the five senses (6), He who is beyond any comparison (7), The virtuous Lord (8), He of cherishable attributes" (9). Besides, the Chapter is given the heading 'In Praise of God'. The phrase '*Kadavuḷ vāḻttu*' occurs in the *Tolkāppiyam* the earliest extant Tamil grammar, which lays down that *Kodinilai*, *Kandaḻi* and *Vaḷḷi*, free from impurities and full of virtue are said along with the 'Praise of God'.[66] Hence it follows that ancient Tamil literary works contained in them 'Praise of God', but the same is conspicuously absent in the *Tolkāppiyam* itself, which, of course, is a grammatical work.

Though the first chapter is devoted to the praise of God, it can be deduced, by the epithets used to denote God, that Tiruvaḷḷuvar has defined what God is. It must be borne in mind that the ancient Tamils were a mundane people who loved life and enjoyed it. But, however, as a highly civilised people, they could not be said to be ignorant of God. The very word in Tamil for God is '*Kadavuḷ*', an unalloyed pure Tamil word meaning 'That which is beyond the comprehension of the mind'. Tiruvaḷḷuvar begins with the premise that God is eternal and hath no beginning. Māṇikkavācakar describes God thus :

> * "Ancient of days, existing ere the ancient world!
> Whose nature shares the newness of created things!"[67]

The permanence and eternity of God is unquestionable. God is beyond affilictions. He is Wisdom Immaculate and beyond any comparison. He is the

* G. U. Pope's translation.

66. *Tolkāppiyam, Poruḷatikāram*, 85.

67. *Tiruvācakam*, VII, 9.

Sea of Virtue and abides in the hearts of the faithful. As to how God was envisaged by other great thinkers and philosophers is an interesting study. The idea of God, who He is and how He can be defined have been agitating the minds of thinkers since man can be said to have become conscious of his own vitality and strength in creation and analysis.

The message of Socrates coming down to us through the centuries undimmed by time, can be seen in this context;

> "I believe that no greater good has ever happened in the State than my service to God. For I do nothing but persuade you all, old and young alike not to take for your persons or properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul. I tell you that virtue is not given by money, but that from virtue comes money and every other good of man, public as well as private." [68]

How Aristotle identified pure form unmixed with matter with God or Divine Spirit has been brought out by A. R. Wadia thus:

> "What Aristotle disowned as Ideas, he admits as Forms. If ideas were really self-existent, it would be justifiable to use a new term *form* to distinguish it from *ideas*. Since a form represents the universals in the individual, all knowledge being of the universal can only be of forms. The form is the essence of a thing, but for its actuality it requires matter. So all becoming requires matter as well as form. Matter is a variable entity, changing its significance, e.g., in man rationality is form and animality is matter, in an animal life is form and its body would be matter. Matter, by

68. A. R. Wadia: *Socrates, Plato and Aristotle—History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western.*

> itself is only the possible, which is made actual by Form. Thus prima facie we got a dualism of form and matter but nothing exists which is not a union of the two. Matter is a rare possibility and does not exist by itself. Aristotle makes an exception in the case of pure Form, unmixed with matter and identified it with God or Divine Spirit."[69]

The Jewish conception of God is interesting.

> "God makes Himself known not in the changeless essence of His eternal being, which is forever closed to man but through time-situations and the meaning they carry as revelations of God's love and judgment. It is precisely the historical event, the fleeting moment, which is fraught with a significance pointing to the Divine. It is here that the prophetic consciousness differs most profoundly from that of Greece and India where Time is swallowed up in Eternity and the quest of the religious mind is for the changeless abiding Reality beyond the flux of Time. There is this further difference. Biblical religion puts the emphasis on right action rather than on philosophic speculation. Man cannot attain to the spiritual sphere by imitating his attributes of goodness, love, mercy and justice. The prophets of Israel insisted that a man should 'know the Lord', but they interpreted the 'knowledge of God' as the outflow of action rather than the result of mere contemplation."[70]

The concept of God is put in different ways by different religions. On an ultimate analysis, the various caravans of beliefs meet at an oasis that is

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69. Ibid.

70. Alexander Altmann: *Jewish Philosophy—History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western.*

God. In order to stress the universal teaching that the *Kural* imparts, it is a necessary requisite to span the dim past with the throbbing present. From such an angle, it is beneficial to know what Christianity and Islam have put forward.

The Gospel according to St. John gives us how the universe began with God :

1. "In the begining was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.
2. The same was in the beginning with God.
3. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.
4. In Him was life; and the life was the light of man.
5. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not."[71]

The Word that was in the beginning was God. There is nothing in the world that has not been created by Him. God is the life and light of man. He is the kindly Light that leads man out of darkness. The very concept of God must have dawned in man's brain only after the word that was the first creation came into the world and hence the Word was God.

The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man have been gripping the minds of peoples of all continents and beliefs. By and large, the existence of a Divine Being is accepted, though it might be contested by a few. As Dr. Samuel Johnson put in a different context, with such persons, all argument is against it but all belief is for it. In his book 'Religion of Islam,' under the Chapter 'The Divine Being', Maulana Muhammad Ali deals with (1) the existence of God, (2) the unity of God and (3) the attributes of God.

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71. New Testament: *The Gospel according to St. John*, Chapter I, 1 to 5.

Regarding the existence of God, he refers to the three main kinds of arguments with which the Holy Qur'an deals.

> "These are at first the arguments drawn from creation, which may be called the lower or material experience of humanity; secondly, the evidence of human nature which may be called the inner experience of humanity and thirdly, the arguments based on divine revelation to man which may be called the higher spiritual experience of humanity..........
>
> The argument from creation simply shows that there *must* be a Creator of this universe, who is also its controller, but it does not go so far as to show that there is a God. The testimony of human nature proceeds a step further, since there is in it a consciousness of Divine existence, though that consciousness may differ in different natures, according as the inner light is bright or dim. It is only revelation that discloses God in the full splendour of His light and shows the sublime attributes."[72]

Writing on the unity of God, Maulana Muhammad Ali says:

> "The unity of God, according to the Holy Qur'an implied that God is one in his person, One in his attributes and One in his works. His Oneness in his person means that there is neither plurality of gods nor plurality of persons in the Godhead; His Oneness in attributes implies that no other being possesses one or more of the Divine attributes in perfection; His Oneness in works implies that none can do the works which God may do."[73]

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72. Maulana Muhammad Ali: *Religion of Islam.*
73. Ibid.

Dealing next with the attributes of God, Maulana Muhammed Ali warns against a certain misconception as to the nature of the Divine being. He writes:

> "God is spoken of in the Holy Qur'an as seeing, hearing, speaking, being displeased, loving, being, affectionate, grasping, controlling etc. but the use of the words must not be taken in any sense as indicating an anthropomorphic conception of the Divine Being. For, He is plainly stated to be above all material conceptions: 'Vision comprehends Him not and He comprehends all vision' (6 : 104). And he is not only above all material limitations but even above the limitation of metaphor: Nothing is like a likeness of Him' (42 : 11).[74]

Seeing everything in God and God in everything has appealed to man most. Swami Vivekananda says:

> "There is but One unit existence and that One is appearing as manifold. This Self or Soul or Substance is all that exists in the universe. That Self or Soul or Substance is the language of non-dualism, the Brahman appearing to be manifold by the interposition of name and form. Look at the waves in the sea. Not one wave is different from the sea, but what makes the wave apparently differ? Name and form; the form of the wave and the name which we give to it 'wave'. That is what makes it differ from sea. When name and form go, it is the same sea. So this whole universe is that One unit Existence; name and form have created all these various differences."

B. R. Rajam Iyer brings out the difference between the Vēdanta and Pantheism.

> "According to Pantheism, God is the sum totality of phenomena; while according to Vēdanta, God

74. Ibid.

is the underlying essence of phenomena—which are but the result of name and form superimposed upon the essence. Therefore, of the two kinds of knowledge—of the phenomena and the noumenon—that which finds the world, the whole existence in its essence to be God is wisdom—the true knowledge, which is itself the end of all other knowledge; for, when we know Him all the world is known." [75]

Zarathushtra, the great prophet of Iran was perhaps a contemporary of the ṛṣis who composed the Rig Vēdic hymns. Zarathushtra means 'he of the golden light' (zaratha 'golden'; ushtra, 'light'). Spitama came to be known by this name after illumination and was refulgent with the light of divine wisdom and heavenly love. His teaching outlined by Irach J. S. Taraporewala in an article is given in brief:

"Zarathushtra's message can be treated under the heads: (i) The acknowledgment of the Supreme Creator, Ahura Mazdā, (ii) the problem of good and evil, and (iii) the teaching about how to live our lives in the world.

"Zarathushtra revived the ancient teaching that there is but one God who is the creator of the whole universe. 'There is none beside the Creator Ahura Mazdā; everything emanates from Him and merges back in Him at the end.'—this in short is the teaching. Ahura Mazdā is formless (like the Nirguna Brahman of the Hindus)." [76]

The idea of the creations emanating from the Creator finally merging in Him has been brought

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75. B. R. Rajam Iyer: *Rambles in the Vedanta.*

76. Irach J. S. Taraporewala: *Zoroastrianism (The Cultural Heritage of India).*—Vol. IV The Religions.

about by Sivavākkiyar in one of his songs: "Like the lightning appearing, spreading and shrinking, My Lord standing within me conceals in me."[77]

Guru Nanak by his teachings wanted to bring about a harmony between Hinduism and Islam. The sayings of the Sikh Gurus including those of Guru Nanak are included in the collection called "*Granth Sahib*". God has been taken by the Gurus not as an abstract idea or a moral force, but as a Being who can be loved and honoured and yet permeates each and every creation of His. "He is the common Father of all, fashioning worlds and supporting them from inside. But, He is never born, He has no incarnation. He himself stands for the creative agencies, like Maya, the Word and Brahma; He Himself is Truth, Beauty and the eternal yearning of the heart after Goodness (Japji). In a word, the Gurus have contrived the Aryan idea of immanence with the Semitic idea of transcendence, without taking away anything from the unity and personal character of God."[78]

Japji of Guru Nanak opens with the following verse:

"He is one-the unmanifest Manifested,
Of Name ever True, Permanent and Pure;
The Prime Male, the only Doer—the Creator,
the Preserver, and the Destroyer,
The Fearless,
The Revengeless,
Of Personality transcending Time—

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77. min eḻuntu min parantu min odunkumāṟu pōl
ennuḷ nintṟa ennuḷ īcan ennuḷē adankumē.
(*Sivavākkiyar pādalkaḷ*)

78. Teja Singh: *The Religion of the Sikh Gurus* (*The Cultural Heritage of India*)—Vol. IV. The Religions.

The Changeless, the Eternal,
The Unborn and Undying,
The Self-eflulgent, Himself the source
of Light and Existence.
By the Grace of Guru-the Teacher Enlightener
Worship.
True before Time; True before Ages;
True also now: and O, Nanak, He shall
for ever be True."[79]

To the quotations given hitherto may be added many more to ponder and study Tiruvaḷḷuvar's conception of God in juxtaposition with others both before and after him. No attempt is here made to spell out where, how, when and whether they fall in line. But this much can be said and with certainty that Tiruvaḷḷuvar's appraisal is bordering on the universal and steers clear of unacceptability by the broad mass of humanity.

79. *Japji* by Guru Nanak. (Rendered into English by Chellaram)

CHAPTER III

EXCELLENCE OF RAIN

The Second Chapter in the *Kuṛaḷ* bears the title: *Excellence of Rain*. For placing this Chapter immediately after "Praise of God" Parimēl Aḻakar says that "it is especially appropriate, as it treats of virtue, wealth and enjoyment, the existence of which by divine appointment depends on rain."

"The top position which rain occupies is said in the Chapter on *Excellence of Rain*. Being an act of God, it is said immediately after. It is said here perhaps as the practice of domestic virtue end ascetic virtue dealt with subsequently is dependent on rain. Besides, it may be appropriaṭe to hold that the author has dealt with the season." (Maṇakkudavar)

"God and charitable acts will not subsist in the absence of rain. For practising these, the gift from the rain must be there." (Paritiyār)

Parimēl Aḻakar, as is usual with him, not only puts down convincingly the reason for the arrangement of the chapters, according to their titles one after the other, at the beginning of each chapter in the *Kuṛaḷ* but also, at the end of a couplet or a group of couplets, as the case may be, given the auxiliary matters dealt with under the main subject in the chapter. As a contrast, Kālinkar, one of the other commentators of the *Kuṛaḷ* discusses the relevance of the forthcoming chapter at the end of each chapter, but does not categorise the couplets within a chapter under different sub-heads. Maṇakkudavar and Paritiyār keep company both with Parimēl Aḻakar

and Kālinkar by an introductory paragraph at the commencement of each chapter, as is the case with the former and the omission of sub-heads as is the case with the latter. The arrangement of the couplets in a chapter in the *Kuṛaḷ* by the commentators is not uniform and varies. In view of the methodical treatment and reasoning, dotted throughout the work, Parimēl Aḻakar's arrangement has been adopted for reference by students of the *Kuṛaḷ* all over the world.

The role played by rain in the life of man is too numerous to be listed. Plants and animals, not to talk of man, depend on rain for their survival. Water is one of the five elements—the other four being Space, Fire, Air and Earth—without which life on earth cannot exist. Even the oceans were formed ater incessant raining for several centuries. The source of water is rain and but for rain, orderly life is impossible. Every stem of a plant, every fibre of a man has moisture, which owes its existence to water and in turn to rain. Man comes into direct contact with nature, when rain descends from above. It is no wonder, therefore, that rain is taken as a divine dispensation.

Dr. G. U. Pope begins his article on the *Excellence of Rain* with the sentence: "It may seem strange that the introductory chapter on God is followed by one on Rain." But in the very next he says "The connection, however, seems evident, as in Acts XIV-17: 'Nevertheless He left not Himself without a witness in that he did good, and *gave us rain from Heaven* and fruitful seasons filling our hearts with food and gladness." Dr. Pope has also quoted a verse from the *Bhagavad Gīta* to bring out the importance of rain and how it finds a niche in the scriptures: "All things which have life are produced from bread which they eat. Bread is produced from rain; rain from

divine worship; and divine worship from good works."[1]

The ancient Tamils were ardent admirers of nature. Not that they worshipped nature as such, but they made themselves part and parcel of their surroundings and wove into her web and made themselves infants in her bosom. They liked roaming, enjoyed moonlit nights, waged wars, sat by gurgling rivulets and boisterous streams, fed by sudden rains from the mountains. They were fully alive of rain in their lives and understood well how failure of seasonal rains would affect their care-free living. They also knew that but for rain the world would be in shambles.

Tiruvaḷḷuvar assigns a place to rain next only to God. But his treatment is a 'down to earth one' and highlights the benefits that accrue to mankind by clouds unburdening themselves and the woes befalling on it by the same withholding their treasure. Conscious cf the part played by rain in the daily life of man, particularly in a tropical country like the Tamil country and generally in all countries, outstanding Tamil poets of a later period have treated *Rain* as a favourite subject in their narrative poems and the descriptions are both thrilling and enchanting.

Before having a close look at them, mention has to be made of the opening lines in *Silappadhikāram*—'Epic of the Anklet' by Iḷanko Adikaḷ, assigned to the second century A. D. The epic opens with obeisance to the Moon, the Sun and the Rain. The lines relating to the Great Rain may be rendered into English thus:

"Our obeisance to the Great Rain!
Our obeisance to the Great Rain!

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1. Notes on the *Kuṛaḷ* of the Tamil Poet Tiruvaḷḷuvar by Rev. G. U. Pope. D.D. The *Indian Antiquary*, Aug. 1880.

As on the world bounded by fear-inspiring water,
Like the Lord of the country (watered by Kaviri) showering his gifts,
Standing above, the Rain falls incessantly." [2]

The princely ascetic author, Iḷankō Adikaḷ, took a hint from Tiruvaḷḷuvar's *Kuṛaḷ* and gave a pride of place to Rain in *Silappadhikāram*. In *Mullai-p-paṭṭu*, one of the *Ten Idylls—Pattu-p-paṭṭu*, included in Sangam works, a rainy evening is described, when a pining wife feels the separation of her warrior husband in a battle-field.

" In the evening of short duration,
After drinking deep in the roaring cold sea,
Rising above and of the mountains,
Making a circumambulation, the recklessly fast clouds
Made a heavy downpour of rain." [3]

Whether it be with Kamban in his Tamil *Rāmāyaṇam* telling the story of Rāma, the Hindu mythological hero or with Tiruttakka Tēvar, the Jain ascetic, in his *Chintāmaṇi* narrating the story of Jīvaka, symbolic of the prosperity of the countries of the epics, the glorious description of the rain and the clouds makes an impressive reading.

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2. māmaḻai pōttṛutum māmaḻai pōttṛutum
nāmanir vēli ulakiṛku avanaḷi pōl
mēnintṛu tān curattalān.
(*Silappadhikāram, Maṅkalavāḻttu-p-pādal*)

3. pādimiḻ panikkadal paruki valarnērpu
kōdukon deḻunta koduñcela veḻili
perumpeyal poḻinta cirupun mālai.
(*Mullai-p-pāṭṭu*, 5—7)

The illustrious Kamban in a verse describes rain thus:

* " Beholding the renowned and mighty mountain shining like gold,
The clouds poured down their streams like pensile threads of silver bounteous as the generous,
Who from the impulse of their own minds,
Dispense their gifts with delight." [4]

Two verses from *Chintāmaṇi*, as rendered into English by F. W. Ellis are given below:

" Like a herd of elephants belonging to some resplendent Emperor, the gregorious clouds having grazed on the clear waves of the troublous ocean, darting lightnings, resembling the beautiful golden flowers of the *condei* on the dark hair of Siva, having reached the mountains and climbed the sky, wide opening bellowed aloud." [5]

" On the top of the high and clustering mountains, covered with honey combs when the clouds had gathered together, their abundant streams, resembling lucid rods of silver, uniting filled the whole heavens and poured down in torrents." [6]

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* Ellis' translation.

4. puḷḷi mālvarai-p pon ena nōkki vān
veḷḷivīḻidai vīḻttena-t-tāraikaḷ
uḷḷiuḷḷa ellām uvantu īyum av
vaḷḷiyōrin vaḻankina mēkamē
(*Kambarāmāyaṇam Pālakāndam, Āttṛuppadalam*)

5. ilanka laḻiyinān kaḻittṛīṭṭam pōl
kalaṅku teṇtirai mēyntu kaṇamaḻai
polankoḷ kontṛayinān cadai pōl minni
vilankal cērntu viṇṇēṛi viṭṭārttṛavē.
(*Cīvakacintāmaṇi, Nāmakaḷ Kalampakam*—2)

6. tēniraittuyar moyvarai-c-cenniyin
mēniraittu vicumpuṛa veḷḷiveṇ
koniraittana pōṛ koḻun tāraikaḷ
vāniraittu maṇantu corintavē. (*Ibid*—3)

Thought provoking as the verses are from Kamban and Tiruttakka Tēvar, they are "a contrast to the chaster style and severer reason of Tiruvaḷḷuvar." The cold logic and reasoning of Tiruvaḷḷuvar are from the hard core of facts and reality. Rain is the *summum bonnum* of life. With man's ingenuities in doing away with so many things as redundant and out of date, the same cannot work in the case of water as he can ill afford to dispense with it, the source of which is rain, just as he has to live by breathing air.

I

vāninṯṟ ulakam vaḻanki varutalāl
tānamiḻtam entṟunaraṟ pāttṟu. (11)

As by continued rain the world exists
So is it to be understood as nectar itself. (11)

With its continued benevolence, rain is essential for the very existence of the world. As such, it has the essential property of being understood as 'ambrosia' itself. *World* has been taken by Parimēl Aḻakar to represent the living beings inhabiting it. He further says: "Just as those who have taken nectar (*amirtam*) perpetually live without dying, Tiruvaḷḷuvar has described the rain that makes the world exist, in the words: Know it to be nectar."

After giving the meaning of the couplet, Maṇakkudavar, who has taken this to be the last in this chapter, adds:

> "As this (rain) helps in the functioning of virtue, wealth and enjoyment and makes the various kinds of food survive, that the other elements should not be taken to be on *par* with rain, has been stressed."

G. U. Pope says:

> "The idea of the couplet is an obvious one: 'Rain gives life to all creation, revives the dying vegetation, restores life to what seems dead.' Anyone who has been in Indian districts suffering from drought and noted the instantaneous change in the aspect of all living things when the long expected rain has fallen, will understand the Poet's feelings: 'Rain is the elixir of immortality' to the whole earth."

He translates the couplet as under:

> "The world its course maintains through life that rain unfailing gives:
> Thus rain is known the true ambrosial food by all that lives."[7]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> "Since by the continued existence of rain the world preserves its course, it (rain) is to be regarded as partaking of the nature of nectar."

W. H. Drew renders the couplet in English thus:

> "Because by the continuance of rain the world is preserved in existence, it is worthy to be called ambrosia."

As is expected of him, F. W. Ellis brings out a fresh approach in giving the correct meaning of the words, "nectar itself", which he has translated as "sole elixir." He translates the couplet thus:

> "As by abundant rain, the world subsists
> Life's sole elixir in this fluid know."

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7. Notes on the *Kuraḷ* of the Tamil Poet Tiruvaḷḷuvar by Rev. G. U. Pope, DD. The *Indian Antiquary, August* 1880.

Ellis observes:

> "'Life's sole elixir'—in the original *amiltham* (ambrosia) the eating of which, as it is feigned, the gods of the inferior heaven obtained immortality; but the word also means the elixir of life or the universal medicine, which the adepts of all nations have so long sought for in vain. The author, I think, intends it to be received in the latter sense; rain, he says, is to be recognised as the true elixir of life, inferring of course, that there is none other."[8]

Three important words which Tiruvaḷḷuvar has used in this couplet are: *rain*, *world* and *nectar*. For bringing out the glory of rain, he has equated rain to nectar, as for the very survival and existence of the world, i.e., the living beings of the world, rain is indispensable. There are two statements made. One is: the world survives because of continued rain. The other is: so, rain is to be considered as life-giving or the sole elixir of life, or the fluid the drinking of which bestows immortarity. If rain is taken as 'life-giving' or the 'sole elixir of life' the first also is a statement of fact as the second one, which should be understood by everyone. If the comparison is to the mythological fluid of immortality, then too, the life-sustaining aspect of 'rain' i.e., water, is commended. The former is rational, while the latter is acceptable.

II

tuppārkku-t tuppāya tuppākki-t tuppārkku-t
tuppāya tū-u maḻai. (12)

Producing food for those who eat
Rain is itself food, for those eating such food. (12)

8. F. W. Ellis: *Aṛappāl.*

This couplet is a corollary to the previous one. If for the living beings of the world, which term includes plant and animal life, rain is life-sustaining, such sustenance can be only through itself forming such food or being the agent producing food. Tiruvaḷḷuvar has elaborated the same in this couplet. Fertility of the soil is enhanced by rain and moist earth brings about a pliability for the roots of plants to go deep and enhance their yield. Nuts, fruits, grains and numerous other items consumed by man and animals as food are the gifts of earth, produced in active cooperation with celestial rain. It is but common knowledge that failure of monsoon rains results in people going without food. The *agent provocateur* in the production of food is the rain, which is a constituent part of it. Rain it is that helps the peasant to produce enough for the people to eat and live. Along with solid food, water is also consumed. Unless the human body has a certain quantity of water in its system, life cannot be sustained. Death will occur due to dehydration. The value of many things can be exaggerated, but never the value of water. It may be authoritatively said that "not a plant, or an animal or a pretty girl can exist without water. The bodies of young people are 90 percent water, and though the volume slowly diminishes to 75 percent as people age, it still must be continually replaced."[9]

Water is consumed along with food or even otherwise. Hence, water whose geneological tree ascends to rain, becomes itself the food of those for whom it has produced other food items. Rain, as water, according to Parimēl Aḻakar removes hunger and thirst of creatures. G.U. Pope echoes the thought of

9. Peter Briggs : Water : The vital essence

Parimēl Aḻakar that "the idea is here, that rain causes fertility and is itself necessary to quench the thirst of men and cattle." When no food is available, the hungry man consumes water which sustains him for sometime. Hence, Maṇakkudavar has said that this puts down hunger.

In translating this couplet into English, G.U. Pope has followed the same arrangement as in the original.

> " For the eaters sweet food making to the eaters
> Itself food becoming such is rain." [10]

Pope's metrical translation is as under:

> " *The rain makes pleasant food for eaters rise;*
> *As food itself, thirst quenching draught supplies.*"

For five words in the couplet, 'tu' is the root, meaning (1) eat, (2) enjoy and (3) experience. The expanded noun forms of the root mean (1) food, (2) enjoyment and (3) sweetness, respectively.

Besides the content, the couplet has attracted the fascination of most because of its alliteration, including G.U. Pope who writes that 'the punning and alliteration are thoroughly in accordance with Tamil ideas.' A transliteration of the couplet is given below:—

> *tuppārakku-t tuppāya tuppākki-t tuppārkku-t*
> *tuppāye tū-u maḻai.*

Pronunciation:	t	as	in	wi*th*
	u	as	in	p*u*t
	ā	as	in	f*a*r
	ū	as	in	hook
	ai	as	in	*ai*sle

10. Notes on the *Kuṛaḷ* of the Tamil Poet Tiruvaḷḷuvar by Rev. G. U. Pope, D. D. The *Indian Antiquary*, August 1880.

Although for purposes of metre, tū-u-m is given separately, it forms part of *tuppāya tū-u-m* meaning *food becoming*. Shortened *tū-u-m* is sufficient. But poetry requires lengthening. Lengthening with a long vowel and retaining the short one by its side gives a pleasing sound effect characteristic of Tamil poetry. On this aspect G.U. Pope writes: "There is a peculiarity in old Tamil, which is called *alabedai* (lengthening) by which in this case short *u* is lengthened to *ū* and then a short *u* is added making *uu* out of *u*. Thus *atum* is made as *atūum*. Hiatus is here allowed. This resembles the process for which Ionic Greek writes *heelios* for *helios*."

"Rain produces food and is itself food" is the one line rendering of W.H. Drew.[11]

III

" *viṇṇintṛū poyppin virinīr viyānulakttu*
uṇṇin tṛūdattṛum paci. (13)

" If the rain fails in the wide world surrounded by sea,
Stabilising itself would hunger torment. (13)

If the rain persists in its failure for a long time, people will go without food; and hunger, and in its wake, pestilence and disease, will make a rich harvest of lives. To a limited extent, if the rain does not keep to certain time schedule conforming to seasons, it may not be possible to raise adequate quantity of food grains and there may be partial starvation among the people. All around the earth, there may be plenty of water in the oceans, but the tragic truth is that that water is of no use to grow food grains or stem the tide of starvation taking a toll of lives. The underground water source too cannot be tapped as

11. W.H. Drew: *An English Translation of the Kuṛaḷ.*

supply is only limited and dries up after sometime and the earth has to replenish its storage of water only from the heavens. On all fronts, if rain refrains from falling, there is no escape from starvation, misery, suffering and death.

What the commentators have said on this couplet is given below:—

Parimēl Aḻakar: If the rain plays false by not falling at the due season, in the sea-girt world, hunger will persist to torment lives.

Though having the sea around, there is no benefit and hence the author says 'the wide sea-girt' world; for want of food due to hunger, lives will be lost.

Maṇakkudavar: If the rain persistently falsifies, in the wide world with the vast sea around, hunger will take root and afflict the lives of all. (Falsify-not doing one's own work.)

As it has been said 'hunger' which is common, men and animals will languish without material comfort and enjoyment.

Paritiyār: If the rain does not fall during the rainy season, the disease of hunger will torment in this earth surrounded by sea.

Kālinkar: If the rain fails for a long time without falling, the fire of hunger will, standing secure amidst the living beings inhabiting the sea-surrounded world, burn them.

Tiruvaḷḷuvar uses the words, *vān* and *maḻai* for *rain* in the first two couplets of the Chapter on *Excellence on Rain*. While *maḻai* is an unambiguous word for *rain*, *vān* meaning *sky* in the first couplet has been used for *rain* as the same falls from the sky. The commentators without an exception have taken *vān* to mean only *rain*. The word used in this couplet is *viṇ* which the commentators Parimēl Aḻakar,

Maṇakkudavar, Paritiyār, and Kālinkar have taken to mean *rain*. *viṇ* like *vān* means sky. It has a second meaning i.e., *rain* and yet another meaning *clouds*. But, however, European students of the *Kuṛaḷ*, G.U. Pope, F.W. Ellis and H.A. Popley have translated *viṇ* as *clouds*.

G.U. Pope has translated the couplet as follows :

> " If the cloud standing (in the sky) deceives (*by* not falling in rain to the earth, hunger will afflict, standing in the midst of the widespread earth, though (this earth is) surrounded by an expanse of waters."

His commentary on the couplet runs as under :

> " The clouds charged with moisture stand over the hills, big with the promise of fertilising showers. If they remain there and do not fulfil their promise, the earth though surrounded by vast ocean of water must fall a prey to all the miseries of famine." [12]

The sense does not change by taking clouds for rain. " While in the sky, you have taken the name of the cloud,"* says a Tamil poet addressing 'Water'. It is a common sight that clouds threatening to rain are carried away by tropical storms and when most needed, deceiving the gaping and anxious peasants, they give the slip and sail away. This has prompted G. U. Pope to translate metrically that

> " If clouds that promised rain, deceive, and in the sky remain.
> Famine, sore torment, stalks o'er earth's vast ocean girdled plain." [13].

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* kakanatturum pōtu nīr entṛu pēr padaittāy.

12. Notes on the *Kuṛaḷ* of the Tamil poet Tiruvaḷḷuvar by Rev. G. U. Pope, DD. The *Indian Antiquary*, Ang. 1880.

13. Dr. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār*.

He has followed F. W. Ellis who has rendered the couplet thus:

"When clouds deceiving hope withheld their stores,
Around the sea-girt earth gaunt famine stalks."[14]

He further explains: "In the poetical language of the Tamil writers, the clouds are not mere collections of vapors but living beings which go to raze in the liquid plains, return surcharged with the fluid they have taken up, slowly climb the mountains and disgorge their contents on their summits. Hence the expression in the commencement of this couplet when clouds standing still deceives—that is when after having gathered together they do not proceed on their journey to the sea and consequently collect no waters."

W. H. Drew translates the couplet thus: "If the cloud withholding rain, deceive (our hopes) hunger will long give distress in the sea-spacious world."[15]

The sum and substance of the couplet is: A spectre haunts man and that is the Spectre of Hunger, if the rain or cloud refrains from falling and raining.

IV

ērin uḻāar uḻavar puyalennum
vāri vaḷaṅkuntṟik kāl (14)

With the plough the ploughman would not plough
If flow of water from the clouds is diminished. (14)

No vocation is possible, if the rain does not discharge its full complement of water. The agriculturists have to remain idle, as the plough cannot be plied. The furrowing of the land is possible only when there is moisture. The first occupation man

14. F. W. Ellis: *Aṟappāl.*
15. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṟaḷ.*

took upon himself was to till the soil and grow his food. Of all the occupations on earth, agriculture continues to dominate the life of man, while others are subservient to it. Just as man cannot live without food, agriculture as the inescapable profession of man for producing food, cannot for ever cease to exist. Unless the human system can digest hunger, the growing of food will continue perpetually and with that the plying of the plough, for which water is essential. Water supply cannot be ensured unless rain plays the game.

G. U. Pope's translation runs as follows:

> "If clouds their wealth of waters fail on earth to pour,
> The ploughers plough with oxen's sturdy team no more."[16]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> "The ploughmen plough not with the yoked oxen when the abundance of the cloud deluge is diminished."

Translating the couplet as under:

> "The fruitful toils of men and steers must cease
> If cease the flow of water from the clouds",

F. W. Ellis has assessed the Tamils as "chiefly agricultural, originally perhaps, wholly so." He further says: "The veneration in which the Tamil people formerly held the plough was unbounded. The numerous remains of ancient art, existing in all parts of the country, consist almost exclusively, in buildings intended for religious and charitable purposes and those reservoirs, channels and embankments, which

16. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṟaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

by restraining and distributing the waters of the periodical rains render the soil fit for the labours for the husbandmen. Many of these are stupendous works and must have been erected when a great portion of the wealth of the country was systematically applied to the agricultural improvement of it." [17]

Kamban, acknowledged by generations of the Tamil knowing public as the Emperor of Poesy whose *magnum opus* is his *Rāmāyaṇam* in Tamil is the author of seventy verses singing the glory of husbandmen, entitled *Ēr eḻupatu* meaning the *Seventy of the Plough.* Some of these culled from Ellis' commentary of the *Kuṟaḷ* are reproduced below :

> "'Those truly live who live by the plough; all others do not live, as they are in servitude and depend on those they serve', is it not so? Is it not thus that in the ancient world the precept was written? Is it not wrong, therefore, to compare with these any that are born in the sea surrounded earth?" [18]

> "By these when the rain pours from the heavens abundance is produced; by these also, is produced the benefit of the science of those by whom the precepts of wisdom are taught; and by the strength of their oxen is supported the strength of the furious elephant, bearing death through the field, when princes lead their armies forth to battle." [19]

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17. F. W. Ellis: *Aṟappāl*

18. uḻutundu vāḻvārē vaḻvār mattṟellārum
toḻutundu pin celvār entṟē ittollulakil
eḻutunda maraiyantrō ivarudanē iyalumitu
paḻutundō kadal cūḻnta pāridattiṟ pirantōrkkē.
(*Ēr eḻupatu,* 19)

19. vānamaḻai poḻintālum vaḷampaduvatevaralē
ñānamaṟaiyavar vēḷvi nalamperuvatəvarālē
cēnaikoduporu mannar cerukkaḷattiṟ cekukkumata
yānaivalievaralē ivareruttin valiyālē. (*Ibid,* 14)

"The yoke attached to the chariot of the glorious sun of beauteous beams dispelleth darkness from the world surrounded by the sea and supported by mountains; is it not also the plough of the yoke of the husbandmen which preserve the inhabitants of the broad and fragrant earth from falling into poverty?"[20]

"Neither the elephants which support the quarters of the world could sustain their burthen nor could the god of love, prepared for combat, place the arrow on his bow, were it not the cultivators of the country enriched by the Kaveri, liberal as the clouds, yoked the oxen to the plough, nor till then does the sun yoke his chariot."[21]

W. H. Drew renders the couplet as follows:

"If the abundance of the wealth-imparting rain diminish, the labour of the plough must cease."[22]

Husbandmen spread over the nooks and corners of the world cannot but beam with pride about the noblest profession on earth, while reading the 'Song of the Plough' by Kamban, an inspiration from the *Kuṛaḷ*.

V

keduppatūum keṭṭārkku-c cārvāymattṛu
āṅkē eduppatūum ellām maḻai. (15)

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20. uraiyēttṛa cenkatirōn oḷi neduntēr pūnda nukan
tiraiyēttṛa kadalulakiṛ ceṛiyiruḷai māttṛuvatu
viraiyēttṛa viru nilattōr verumaiyodu vīḻame
karaiyēttṛu nukamantṛō kāraḷar uḻu nukamē.
(*Er eḻupatu*, 16)

21. pārpūṭṭum ticaiyanaittum pakadukaḷum parampūṇā
pōrpūṭṭum kāmanum tan porucilaimēṛ caram pūṭṭan
kāṛpūṭṭum kodaittadakkai-k kavērivaḷanādar
ērpūṭṭinallātu mattṛiraviyum tēr pūṭṭanē.
(*Ibid*, 17)

22. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ*

Rain it is all that ruins and standing
In support of the ruined, lifts them up too. (15)

Rain ruins and dislocates the lives of people by not falling at the proper time. But it possesses at the same time the cardinal quality of erasing without a trace even the ruin by discharging in bounty and uplifting the ruined to prosperity and plenty. By 'Rain ruins' is meant the disaster brought about by the failure of the rains and all the commentators attribute the same meaning to the phrase. Paritiyãr gives the meaning of the couplet in a sentence : "It is rain that ruins the prosperous and showers prosperity on the ruined."

The ruin brought about by rain is attributed by G. U. Pope to the destructive violence of tropical storms. As in interpreting a number of couplets, here too he has followed F. W. Ellis, who translates the couplet as under :

"It spreads destruction round ; it's genial aid
Again revives, restores all it destroys ;
Such is the power of rain."

Spotlighting the words "restores all it destroys", his commentary runs as under :

> "Those who in tropical climates have seen the face of the descending floods, rushing in torrents over the lands and sweeping all before them, and those who, after a long continuance of drought, have there seen nature, awakened, as it were from her lethargy by the fury of the storm, covering the parched and barren plains with live and verdure, can alone duly appreciate the justness of this thought."[23]

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23. F. W. Ellis : *Aṛappāl.*

The literal translation given by Pope reads :

"That which will ruin; that which will uplift, becoming a help to the ruined, all is rain.'.[24]

His metrical translation runs as under :

"'Tis rain works all; it ruin spreads, then timely aid supplies;
As in the happy days before, it bids the ruined rise."[25]

If the overall advantage accruing due to rainfall is weighed against the destruction and ruin brought about, the former should always tilt the balance against the latter. As against the havoc wrought in the wake of torrential rain accompanied by tropical storms, the greater ruin shall be to go without rain. And very correctly, the commentators have taken "ruin" to connote 'ruin not by raining.'

W. H. Drew translates :

"Rain destroys and on the other hand, helping restores what it has destroyed; rain does all this."[26]

VI

vicumpil tuḷivīḻin allalmat ṭrāṅkē
pacumpul talaikāṉ paritu. (16)

But for drops of rain from the sky, rare it is
To see a tip of green grass. (16)

Those possessing life have been divided into six categories in the *Tolkāppiyam* :

"Life of one sense is that of knowing by touch;

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24. Notes on the *Kuṟaḷ* of the Tamil Poet Tiruvaḷḷuvar by Rev. G. U. Pope, D. D. The *Indian Antiquary*, Aug. 1880.
25. G. U. Pope : *The Sacred Kuṟaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār*.
26. W. H. Drew : An English Translation of the *Kuṟaḷ*.

Life of two senses is, in addition to it, that of the tongue;
Life of three senses, is, in addition to those, the nose;
Life of four senses is, in addition to those, the eye;
Life of five senses is, in addition to those, the ear;
Life of six senses is, in addition to those, the mind;
The wise sticking to the right path codified thus."[27]

Unless the showers come down from the sky, even a blade of green grass can scarcely be seen anywhere. Green symbolises fertility. Though grass is not considered seemingly even beneficial, it creates in man a sense of satisfaction of his environment and is indicative of the oncoming prosperity. Even with a little rain, grass sprouting about brings a refreshing change to the dry look before the showers, heralding the dawn of hope and cheer. A modicum of moisture enables grass to exhibit signs of life and a few drops of heavenly rain give the glistening artistic touch to the tips. The underlying idea in saying that it is rare to see even a tip of grass is that unless the world is blessed with rain, even grass with one sense cannot survive; and the question of survival of others will then not arise.

The *Tolkāppiyam* defines again what a life of one sense is:

"Grass and tree are of one sense;
Of the same birth there are others too."[28]

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27. onṭraṛivatuvē uttṛaṛivatuvē
irandaṛivatuvē atanodu nāvē
mūntṛaṛivatuvē avattṛodu mūkkē
nankaṛivatuvē avattṛodu kaṇṇē
aintaṛivatuvē avattṛodu ceviyē
āṛaṛivatuvē avattṛodu mananē
nēritin uṇarntār neṛippaduttinarē.
(*Tolkāppiyam, Poruḷatikāram marapiyal* - 27)

28. pullum maramum ōṛaṛivinavē
piravum uḷavē akkiḷai-p-piṛappē.
(*Ibid*-28)

While Parimēl Aḻakar says that unless drops from the clouds are seen falling, it is rare to see a tip of grass. He amplifies further that there is no life of even one sense. Maṇakkudavar is forthright by saying that even life of one sense will perish.

G. U. Pope has followed the meaning of Parimēl Aḻakar faithfully. He has also tried to bring out "something of the effect of rhythm in the liberal rendering; where the rhyme is preserved" of this couplet:

> "If the drops/of the rain fall/not then the/green shoots/of the crops/are not seen/putting forth."[29]

The metrical translation of Pope is as under:—

> "If from the clouds no drops of rain are shed,
> 'Tis rare to see green' herb lift up its head."[30]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:—

> "Unless the drop of rain falls from the cloud, scarcely may you see the green grass putting forth its head."

W. H. Drew translates the couplet:

> "If no drop fall from the cloud, not a green blade of grass will be seen."[31]

Unlike in English, in Tamil poetry, the words rhyme in the beginning of the lines and not at the end. Here in this couplet, as in all the couplets of the *Kuṛaḷ*, the first line has four feet and the second three feet.

VII

Rain is indispensable for the sustenance of man and the orderly functioning of society. Plants,

29. Notes on the *Kuṛaḷ* of the Tamil Poet Tiruvaḷḷuvar by Rev. G. U. Pope, DD. The *Indian Antiquary*, Aug. 1880.
30. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār*.
31. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ*.

animals and other forms of life need rain as much as man. Why, there is a jolt even in the creation of new lives in the sea. Not only the land surface of the earth but also the area covered by water requires its storage to be replenished, lost by evaporation. But for the heavenly drops of rain from above, corals, conches and pearls too will cease to be created, according to Paritiyār.

neduṅkadalum tannīrmai kuntṛum tadinteḻili
tānalkā tāki vidin. (17)

The wide sea itself will diminish in its character,
Should the cloud not unburden itself and render
back the water. (17)

It is on a reciprocal basis that the sea and the cloud function. The evaporated water takes the form of cloud that renders unto the sea what is the sea's by raining water from above. Fresh water to the sea is like the veins to the body without which life in the sea will get cramped and ultimately perish with grave consequences to life on the land. The sea is not simply an expanse of water and for the sea to retain its living wealth and thus preserve its character, the life-giving rain that brings freshness and vigour is both contributory and complementary to the oceans surrounding the land.

Dr. G. U. Pope has translated the couplet thus :

"The broad sea even will diminish in goodness,
If the clouds do not swell and pour down its gifts."[32]

The translation has brought out the exact import of the couplet in the use of the words, 'diminish in

32. Notes on the *Kuṛaḷ* of the Tamil Poet Tiruvaḷḷuvar by Rev. G. U. Pope, DD. The *Indian Antiquary*, Aug. 1880.

goodness'. Diminishing in goodness is due to the sea losing its characteristic quality because of no rain. Man has all along depended on the wealth of the sea for providing him with nourishing food items. For the effective functioning of the earth as a unit inclusive of its watery portion, for the good of the world, the clouds should not withhold their gifts of water from the sky, both to the sea and the land.

What is known as hydrologic cycle has to continue perpetually, if the land and water surfaces of the earth are to be maintained in their present proportions. Peter Briggs explains as to how this cycle is repeated. "The sea covers almost three quarters of the surface of the earth and is about 7 per cent of the earth's total mass. The hydrologic cycle is, in technical language, a heat exchange system. It has also been described as a vast system of natural plumbing. As the water is evaporated by the energy of the sun, it is also purified. When it finally returns to the surface of the earth, most of it is soon evaporated once again. The water taken by plants is transpired, that is, returned to the air as vapour through the leaves. Some of the rest of the precipitated water stays in lakes or becomes ground water. The remainder is carried by gravity down streams and rivers to the sea—where the whole cycle starts again." [33]

W. H. Drew has translated the couplet thus:

> "Even the wealth of the wide sea will be diminished if the cloud that has drawn (its waters) up gives them not back again in rain." [34]

The dependance on rain for the proper functioning of the world has been said in the foregoing seven couplets.

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33. Peter Briggs: *Water: The vital essence.*
34. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṟaḷ.*

VIII

ciṟappodu pūcanai cellātu vānām
vaṟakkumēl vanōrkkum īndu. (18)

Neither will there be any festival nor worship,
Should the heavens dry up, for the heavenly beings here. (18)

Every activity on earth hinges on rain, as rain is the harbinger of prosperity. Festivities and community worship do not evoke the required spirit and enthusiasm, when the wherewithal is not there. In view of subdued activity in the day to day life due to the failure of rain, expenditure is pruned to the barest minimum resulting in festivities and feasts for heavenly gods and in remembrance of ancestors coming to an abrupt end. V. V. S. Aiyar has rendered the couplet thus:

> "Sacrifies will not be offered to the Gods, nor feasts be celebrated on earth, if the heavens should be dried up."[35]

This is in tune with the implied meaning of 'festival and worship.'

G. U. Pope has translated the couplet as under:

> "If heaven grow dry, with feast and offering never more
> Will men on earth the heavenly ones adore."[36]

He has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> "If the heaven dry up, worship to the heavenly ones with due solemnity on earth will not be paid."

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35. V. V. S. Aiyar: *The Kuṟaḷ* or *The Maxims of Tiruvaḷḷuvar.*

36. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṟaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

W. H. Drew translates as under:

> "If the heaven dry up, neither yearly festivals nor daily worship will be offered in this world to the inhabitants of heaven."[37]

IX

tānam tavam irandum taṅkā viyanulakam
vānam vaḻaṅka tenin. (19)

Both charity and penance will not stay in the wide world
Should the heavens not bestow their gifts. (19)

Parimēl Aḻakar defines charity and penance. Charity is the distribution of things got by following the path of virtue, to the deserving, with pleasure. Penance is eating less by being austere in order to keep the mind stable without being diverted to the path laid by the five organs. By and large, charity comes under domestic virtue and penance under ascetic virtue.

If the sky witholds its gift of rain, life comes to a standstill. When there is hardly anything to eat, nothing is left to spare. Nobility in man is always reflected in his readiness to part with, what he has, to suffering humanity. Failure of rain dislocates orderly life which necessarily includes parting of wealth by a few for the many. Charity and alms-giving are resorted to with fanfare and wide publicity mainly with a view to conceal the short-comings of the giver. That is why Christ is very severe and advises the benevolent to be anonymous.

He says:

> "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."[38]

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37. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ*.
38. New Testament: St. Mathew, VI–3.

This divine spark in man does not get ignited because of penury, all due to the rain withholding its bounty.

Even the man of God, the ascetic, is not spared. When the world around him is writhing in pain, naturally he is shaken and unable to contemplate in peace.

Pope translates the couplet as under:

> "If heaven its watery treasures cease to dispense,
> Through the wide world cease gifts and deeds of penitence."[39]

He has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> "Neither alms-giving nor ascetic practices will abide in the wide world, if the sky dispense not its gifts."

W. H. Drew has rendered the couplet as under:

> "If rain fall not, penance and alms deeds will not dwell within this spacious world."[40]

In the previous couplet while Tiruvaḷḷuvar dwelt on the collective acts of festivities and feasts withering away on account of lack of rain, in this couplet he pinpoints that individual charity and penance, the hope of the world, will not stay too, should the heavens fail.

X

nīrinṭ ṟamaiyā tulakenin yāryārkkum
vāninṭ ṟamaiyā toḻukku. (20)

Without water the world cannot function. If so,
None can have orderly conduct without rain. (20)

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39. Dr. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṟaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

40. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṟaḷ.*

Both Maṇakkudavar and Kālinkar have interpreted the couplet that just as the world cannot go on without water, there can be no orderly life with any kind of people in the absence of rain. Parimēl Aḻakar takes the couplet to mean that "however high people are, worldly life cannot go on without water. In the same way, water cannot flow without a break without rain". His commentary runs: "The author calls the pleasures of wealth by the term 'worldly life', because they relate to this life. 'Flowing without a break' is for all times and all places. Just as it is clear that 'wordly life cannot go on without water', in the same way that there can be no flow without rain, can also be clearly understood."

The word used for 'water' in the couplet is '*nīr*' which T.V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar takes to mean 'attribute,' 'quality'. Normally such words convey a good sense unless specified contrarariwise. Just as without good attributes or qualities the world cannot have peace, orderly conduct cannot be assured without water. He takes the word 'amaiyātu' occurring in two places to mean "there will be no peace" and "will have no place". He writes: "For leading an orderly life, there must be prosperity all round. Rain is essential for prosperity. There can be no prosperity without rain and no decent living in the absence of prosperity. Where there is no decent living, there can be no good conduct"[41]

Two indispensables are underlined by the author. One is water and the other is regulated good conduct or behaviour. *Oḻukkam*-good conduct is derived from *oḻuku*-to flow, to stick to a path. Water is indispen-

41. T. V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar: Tirukkuṛaḷ Virivurai—Pāyiram.

sable for the orderly functioning of the world. There can be no water unless it rains without which man cannot lead his life in a regulated manner which is called conduct.

M. S. Purnalingam Pillai translates the couplet as follows:

> "Should there be no rain there will be no flow of water, and the world cannot abide without it or none will perform his duty." [42]

On closer scrutiny two separate meanings can be attributed to M. S. Purnalingam Pillai. The first is: "The world cannot abide without water. Should there be no rain, none will perform his duty". The second meaning is: "The world cannot abide without water. Should there be no rain, there will be no flow of it."

G. U. Pope translates the couplet as under:

> "When water fails, function of nature cease,
> you say;
> Thus when rain fails, no men can walk in duty's
> ordered way". [43]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> "If the world's work to none goes on without water, without rain the prescribed order cannot be preserved."

W. H. Drew in his rendering of the couplet has followed Parimēl Aḻakar's interpretation:

> "If it be said that the duties of life cannot be discharged by any persons without water, so without rain there cannot be the flowing of water." [44]

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42. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai: *The Kuṛaḷ in English.*
43. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanar.*
44. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ*

Tiruvaḷḷuvar has been much captivated by rain. He has used *rain* as similes for driving home his teachings more times than any other. The gracious help others without any return. Would the world ever repay its debt to rain ? (211). As the people look up to the monarch for protection, so does the world to rain for subsistence (542). The rule under a despot has been compared to that of the earth beneath a rainless sky (557). The benefactor who has exhausted his wealth in the service of his fellowmen is compared to the cloud that has unburdened itself (1010).[45]

The relationship between man and rain is compared by him to the grace lovers bestow on those they love.

> *" As heaven on living men showers blessings from above,
> Is tender grace by lovers shown to those they love."[46]

Kālinkar discusses the justification for the arrangement of the next Chapter in the concluding portion on the Chapter on *Excellence of Rain*. He writes: " *Praise of God* and *Excellence of Rain* are indispensable for ascetic and domestic virtues and rightful conduct. After these, the author deals, in the expanding preface, with the latter two, of which *Ascetic Virtue* is said in the next chapter."

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45. Dr. M. Varadarajan: *Tiruvaḷḷuvar allatu Vāḻkkai Viḻakkam.*

46. vāḻvārkku vānam payantattṟāl vīḻvārkku
vīḻvār aḷikkum aḷi. (*Tirukkuṟaḷ*, 1192)

* G. U. Pope's Translation.

CHAPTER IV

THE GREATNESS OF THOSE WHO RENOUNCED

In this Chapter, Tiruvaḷḷuvar speaks of the greatness of those who have renounced. In the absence of a proper word, the word 'ascetic' is used here. Ascetics can be defined as those that have forsaken or renounced. Two words in Tamil are used—nīttār and *turantār*, those that have forsaken and those that have renounced, respectively. Both the terms are used by the author, one after the other in the first and the second couplets and these can be taken to be synonyms. Of course, there is a subtle difference that in as much as certain instincts and desires drop down with the passage of time and the distinction with advancing years the ego of 'I' and the possessive instinct of 'me' and 'mine' are renounced with a determination, not waiting for time to work out these. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai defines that "'*nīttārs*' are ascetics for life while *turavis* are renouncers of worldly life in old age.'[1] *Nīttars*, *turavis*, *ascetics*—they may be taken as holy men addicted to the path of virtue with no worldly attachment but for compassion and love for humanity. There is a different view also. The word 'renounced' has been interpreted by some to mean those who have forsaken the world and the woman. Somehow a wrong notion creeped into the minds of people that that only is renunciation which involves forsaking worldly life and woman. To forsake the woman or the world is something

1. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai: *The Kuṛaḷ in English.*

inconsistent with natural life. Tiruvaḷḷuvar wants a life to be lived consistent with nature. He would never advocate forsaking the woman, or the world. Hence the words, "renounced" and "forsaken" must be taken to mean forsaking or renouncing the impurities of the mind. F. W. Ellis has expressed the view that "the title of this chapter may be rendered more literally: *The greatness of holy men*"[2] T. V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar gives the meaning of *nīttār* as those who have left off impurities of mind, renounced and got themselves released from bondage. Omipresent though God is, He is in His splendour in a place free from impurities. In their lotus hearts He exists in dazzling brightness.[3]

"By 'greatness of ascetics' is said the glory of holy men who have renounced completely. As they, by their teachings, make the world understand the different aspects of life beginning with virtue, this chapter finds its place after *Excellence of Rain.*" (Parimēl Aḻakar)

"By 'greatness of ascetics' is meant the greatness of holy men who have renounced. As to God, obeissance to holy men must be done." (Maṇakkudavar)

Paritiyār describes the greatness of ascetics as 'the victory of those who desire not'.

The Old Commentary characterises this chapter as the one on the greatness of ascetics who have renounced inner and outer possessive instincts.

Along with Purnalingam Pillai saying that "this chapter bespeaks the Jaina tone of this great

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2. F. W. Ellis: *Aṟappāl.*
3. T. V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar *Tirukkuṟaḷ Virivurvi Pāyiraṃ.*

work",[4] it is said by a number of scholars that Tiruvaḷḷuvar has a Jain saint in his mind. G. U. Pope says that "there is much here which may be compared with the Christian scriptures and we can see in the Tamil verses an echo of Biblical sayings." There can be no two opinions on Pope's view that "nowhere is the eclecticism of Tiruvaḷḷuvar more conspicuous than in this chapter. Every system has its ascetics and self-denial every where mighty."[5]

I

oḻukkattu nittār perumai viḻuppattu
vēndum panuval tuṇivu. (21)

The greatness of those who renounced, adhering to righteous conduct,
All literature will require for their own loftiness. (21)

Parimēl Aḻakar's commentary of this couplet elaborates the meaning he has given to it. "The greatness of the ascetics adhering to righteousness" has been taken by him to mean the greatness of those who adhered to righteousness ordained for them and then renounced. His commentary is a fine piece of reasoning, but his induction of the conception of *varṇa* is but a wish of his thought. The same as translated by Pope clearer than that of Ellis, but closely following it is as follows:—"A strict adherence to the proper rule is true devotion (renunciation). By thus adhering to the rules of their respective castes or positions, virtue increases; by increase of virtue sin is worn away; by wearing away of sin ignorance departs; by departure of

4. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai: *The Kuṛaḷ in English.*
5. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

ignorance the perception of the difference between things temporal and things eternal is gained, and with it a disgust at the transient pleasures of this world and the next and the feeling of the affliction of successive births is concerned; then comes an eager desire for *vīdu* (release); then comes abandonment of fruitless effort, which is cause of births with the practice of meditation (yōga); from this true knowledge proceeds; the external bond which is "mine" and the internal bond which is "I" are loosed and those two bonds are announced with abhorrence".[6] According to Parimēl Aḻakar righteous code differs from caste to caste which is something alien to the very ethics of the *Kuṛaḷ*. Starting with caste, Parimēl Aḻakar unconsciously deviates to principles of general application. The concluding portion of the commentary as translated by Ellis says: "As the word, *panuval* 'code' is here used in a general sense, it must be received as meaning that this is the ordination of codes of all sects, however differing from each other on other points."

Literature speaks of the greatness of those, who have renounced all things for the sake of lofty conduct, in the interest of enhancing its own importance. A work dealing with any subject will speak with great regard the greatness of those who have renounced so that everybody may speak high of it.

The couplet is translated by F. W. Ellis as follows:

"A strict adherence to the rule professed,
Than do all other virtues, the devout
Exalteth more, this every code ordains."[7]

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6. Dr. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār*.
7. F. W. Ellis: *Aṛappāl*.

G. U. Pope has followed Ellis and his translation runs as under:

"The settled rule of every code requires,
as highest good,
Their greatness who renouncing all,
true to their rule have stood."[8]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

"Among things excellent the greatness of ascetics (living) according to (their) institutions is desired by the decision of the scripture."

W. H. Drew translates the couplet thus:

"The clear sense of every treatise desires, beyond all other excellence, the greatness of those who, while abiding in the rule of conduct *peculiar to their state*, have abandoned all desire."[9]

II

tuṛantār perumai tuṉaikkūṛin vaiyattu
iṛantārai eṉṉikkoṉ datṛu. (22)

If the greatness of those who renounced is to be
gauged,
It is like counting the dead on earth. (22)

In the preceding couplet, it was said the greatness of the men of renunciation is the pride of chosen literature the ideal of which is to spotlight it. Whether at all their greatness can be assessed or gauged is dealt with in the second couplet. 'Counting the dead' is the simile used by Tiruvaḷḷuvar for measuring their greatness. The implied meaning is

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8. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*
9. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ.*

'counting those born and dead on earth.' On elaboration, it will further mean that those who renounced were not, strictly speaking, dead men but those who live in perpetuity and only those who did not renounce would come under the category of persons born and dead in the world, according to Kālinkar. Just as it is not within our capacity to count those born and dead on earth, it is equally an impossible task for anyone to measure or assess the greatness of lofty men of high conduct who renounced.

F.W. Ellis translates the couplet thus:

> "To count the virtues holy men attain
> Were as to count the ghosts, that from this world
> Have taken flight."[10]

What induced Ellis to interpret the 'dead' as 'ghosts' is not clear. The impossible task of counting exactly the dead was used as a pointer to highlight the greatness of the renounced men of lofty conduct, which is an equally impossible one.

G. U. Pope has faithfully followed the text in his rendering:

> "As counting those that from the earth have passed away,
> 'Tis vain attempt the might of holy men to say."[11]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> "If you (attempt to) declare the measure of the greatness of ascetics, it is as if you reckoned up the world's departed ones."

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10. F. W. Ellis: *Aṛappāl.*
11. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

W. H. Drew has not translated the couplet exactly but added a few words more by way of amplification.

> "To describe the measure of the greatness of those who have forsaken the two-fold desires, is like counting the dead."[12]

III

irumai vakai terintu īndaram pūndār
perumai piṛankittṛ ulaku. (23)

The greatness of those who have taken to virtue,
After understanding the relative importance of the two states,
Stands foremost in this world. (23)

Men of renunciation are those who conform themselves to the path of virtue. They do not themselves talk about their greatness. Perhaps they are not conscious of it. But it is the world around that speaks of them. Men of learning and wisdom are astonishingly quick in spotting out such men and feel that to speak of them is an honour to themselves. Greatness may be attributed to many in varied fields. But the greatness of the men of renunciation is the greatest of all such greatnesses in this world. It is believed that holy men know both the states—birth in this world and the sojourn in heaven. While Parimēl Aḻakar and Maṇakkudavar have taken that only the greatness of the men of renunciation is atop the world, Paritiyār, Kālinkar and the Old Commentary interpret that because of the greatness of the men of renunciation, the world is enriched. The "two states" known to the men of renunciation may be taken as the 'life herein' and the 'life beyond', 'this birth' and the 'next one'. Everyone is sure of the "life herein' or

12. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ*.

'this birth', but none can be certain of the 'future birth', or the 'life beyond' or the 'world beyond'.

G. U. Pope renders the couplet as under:

"Their greatness earth transcends, who way of both worlds weighed,
In this world take their stand, in virtue's robe arrayed."[13]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

"The greatness of those who discerning the (way) relations of the two states have put on virtue here, is resplendent in the world."

W. H. Drew translates the couplet as follows:

"The greatness of those who have discovered the properties of both states of being and clothed themselves in virtue shines forth on earth (beyond all others)."[14]

IV

uranennum tōttiȳan ōraintum kāppān
varanennum vaipiṛkōr vittu. (24)

He who controls the five with the hook of wisdom
Is a seed for the soil of heaven. (24)

Tiruvaḷḷuvar seats the holy men of renunciation on a lofty pedestal as high as that for gods. In the earlier chapter, he describes God as having extinguished the five senses flowing from the five organs. In this couplet he describes the holy man as a seed fit for the soil of heaven. To Tiruvaḷḷuvar, godliness is not something evasive, illusory or an

13. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*
14. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṛal.*

unthinkable phenomenon, sojourning in the minds of dialecticians; it is something positive, subject to clear definition, seen in the forms of men who, by their behaviour and conduct, by their strength of mind and robust knowledge, control themselves by putting down the sense urges and raise themselves to godliness. A big elephant is controlled by a small hook of iron and the senses are kept under check by men of will from coalescing with the body, mouth, eye, ear and nose. The mightiest of intellectuals, the greatest of saints, the highest of philosophers, have at no time been slaves to urges. The organs are checked by controlling the senses and in turn the mind is controlled by keeping in check the senses. The senses are migratory always yearning for pastures green and are the potential high priests of impurities of the mind. Once these are put down, the field of service for the man of knowledge or wisdom gets enlarged. He is so to speak, in the words of Maṇakkudavar, "a seed on earth for ascending to a higher place." He elaborates that "he is not of human quality living in this world but of the gods."

Kālinkar says: "He, who, with the help of the hook of the wisdom of the mind functioning straight protects and keeps under control, the five sense organs and does not allow them the scope to enlarge beyond the ordained code, is the first cause for the ultimate land called 'Release'."

F. W. Ellis translates the couplet as follows:

"As the hook rules the elephant, so he
In wisdom his sensual organs rules,
Who hopes to flourish in the soil of heaven."[15]

15. F. W. Ellis: *Aṛappāl.*

G. U. Pope's rendering runs as under :

" He who with firmness curb the five restrains,
Is seed for soil of yonder happy plains." [16]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows :

" He, who guards (controls) the five by the good of fortitude, is a seed for the place that is termed the boon."

W. H. Drew's translation is as under :

" He who guides his five senses by the hook of wisdom, will be a seed in the world of excellence " [17]

His translation differs from the other renderings in his using the word, '*in*' instead of '*for*' before the words, 'the world of excellence.'

V

aintavittān āttṛal akalvicumpu lārkōmān
intiranē cālum kari. (25)

Indra, the lord of expansive sky bears testimony
To the might of him who extinguished the five. (25)

Indra, the Lord of the gods, in consequence of the intrigue with Ahalya, the wife of the sage, Gautama, had to suffer a dreadful punishment on a curse from him. Parimēl Aḻakar alludes to it briefly in his commentary that " Indra himself not having subdued his senses was made to know the power of the sage whose senses were subdued by the effects of his curse; therefore, he says Indra himself is a sufficient witness." The story of Indra suffering a curse from

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16. G. U. Pope : *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyānar.*
17. W. H. Drew : An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ.*

the sage Gautama occurs in the 38th and 39th sections of the Book of Childhood in the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki and also of the 9th section of the same book in the *Rāmāyaṇam* of Kamban. The Jain view-point does not subscribe to the allusion of this story having any relevance to this couplet. Indra, the Lord of the gods, by virtue of his position is the proper witness to depose for the greatness of holy men. "It is a well-known Jaina tradition that whenever a person after conquering the senses, becomes omniscient by realising his own perfect self, Indra with his retinue is expected to go to him and offer worship. There he is supposed to dance and sing the praise of the Omniscient Lord."[18]

Maṇakkudavar gives the meaning of the couplet saying that Indra, the Lord of the gods of the vast sky is a sufficient witness to the efficacy of one who renounced the five pleasures. He further says in his commentary that if in this there are persons who can do hard penance, Indra trembles fearing the loss of his position and hence the might of those who renounced.

G. U. Pope translates the couplet thus:

> "Their might who have destroyed 'the five' shall soothly tell
> Indra, the lord of those in heaven's wide realms that dwell."[19]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> "Indra, Lord of those who dwell in the wide expanse, is sufficient witness of the might of him who has extinguished the five."

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18. A. Chakravarti: *Tirukkuṛaḷ with English Translation and Commentary.*
19. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

F. W. Ellis renders the couplet as follows:

"Let Indra say, the king who all controls
Within the expanse of Heaven, how great his power,
Who his five senses in subjection holds"[20]

W. H. Drew's translation runs as given below:

"Indran himself the king of the inhabitants of the spacious heaven, is a sufficient proof of the strength of him who has subdued his senses."[21]

Indra was a Vedic god. But between the Ṛg Vēdic period and the period when the epics were written and the emergence of Buddha and Mahāvīra, he became a much denigrated god, as is evident from the many incidents regarding him. In the subsequent Jaina and Buddhist as also in the Vaiṣṇava and Saiva literatures, he was relegated to a much lower position. Many might have been the popular stories regarding Indra at the time Tiruvaḷḷuvar lived. This might have induced him to introduce a mythological story and to drive home his point that he who controls his senses is greater than even the lord of gods.

VI

eeyaṟkariya ceyvār periyar ciṟiyar
ceyaṟkariya ceykalā tār. (26)

The great ones are those who will do what is not possible (for others) to do;
The little ones are those who cannot do what is not possible.

In this couplet, Tiruvaḷḷuvar gives a definition of the great and the little ones. Perhaps it would be

20. F. W. Ellis: *Aṟappāl.*
21. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṟaḷ.*

profitable to bracket this couplet with the previous one. Even Indra becomes submissive and bows down before a sage who controls his senses. It is given only to the great to do the impossible task of subduing their senses. Though by corollary, the second part of the couplet automatically follows the first part, it is for the sake of emphasis, the same is told in clear terms. G. U. Pope supposes that 'the poet means the harder conquest of self and attainment of virtue' and renders the couplet thus:

> "Things hard in the doing will great men do;
> Things hard in the doing the mean eschew."[22]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> "The great will do things difficult of accomplishment, the little will not do things difficult of accomplishment."

This is a couplet where the words used are the simplest. But the words 'impossible' and 'possible' 'hard' and 'simple' elude definition. Rare and impossible things, a number of people can do. But do they have a claim to greatness? Greatness is measured better in terms of the good that is bestowed on humanity than other achievements and only those who can wield the reins of control over their senses against those who give to such senses the utmost freedom, are the really great ones.

M. S. Purnalingam Pillai's translation is as under:

> "The great do rare things or works wonders;
> The base are those who are unable to do them."[23]

22. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*
23. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai: *The Kuṛaḷ in English.*

W. H. Drew translates the couplet as under:

"The great will do those things which it is difficult to do; the mean cannot do those things which it is difficult to do."[24]

This couplet is sandwiched between the couplet speaking of the might of him who has extinguished the five and the one knowing the properties of taste, sight, touch, sound and smell and these have a bearing on greatness.

VII

cuvaiyoḷi ūṟōcai nāttṟamen tṟaintin
vakaiterivān kaṭṭē ulaku. (27)

The world is with him who knows
The properties of taste, sight, touch, sound and smell. (27)

The quintessence of the couplet is: The world will fall in line in the path set by him who has analysed the implications of the functioning and after effects of the five organs of sense and is clear about them. He who has conquered the temptations of the five senses conquers self and guides the world. As the world falls in line, such men as have conquered the five are greater than the world, according to Paripperumāḷ. Paritiyār interprets that great men will live in the company of those who restrain their minds from going in the way of the five senses. The 'world' has been taken by Paritiyār as "the great men of the world".

Ellis translates the couplet as under:

"Taste, light, touch, sound and smell, if these be known
And with them all connected, of the world
The whole is known."

24. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṟaḷ*.

He adds: "The simple meaning of the author in this verse is, that, as it is by the senses only that the mind can derive knowledge, human knowledge of all kinds, must be connected, or, to adhere closely to the original, must be according to the way of the objects of sense here enumerated; he, therefore, who has a clear understanding of them, of their powers and effects, is alone complete in knowledge. Such is the contemplative sage, who having reduced his sensual organs to entire subjection, must beyond all others, have acquired a more perfect comprehension of the senses and of their observation."[25]

Only he who has conquered self i.e., the mind by subjugating taste, sight, smell, sound and touch can be said to be the man who has acquired knowledge. Only he can be at the helm. Men of understanding acknowledge his greatness and leadership and follow his footsteps in tacit obedience.

G. U. Pope renders the couplet as under:

> "Taste, light, touch, sound and smell; who knows the way
> Of all the five,—the world submissive owns his sway."[26]

He has also quoted *Nāladiyār*, verse 59, which he renders thus:

> "Who undisturbed, in 'way of right ordained' has
> To guard and guide desires and lusts that entrance find
> By sense gates five, called 'body, mouth, eye, nose and ear'
> Unfailing he 'release' shall gain."[27]

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25. F. W. Ellis: *Aṟappāl.*
26. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṟaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*
27. meyvāyakaṉ mūkkuc ceviyenap pēr petṟa
aivāya vētka avavinaik—kaivāy
kalankāmaṟ kāttuykkum ātṟal udaiyān
vilankātu vīdu peṟum. (*Nāladiyār*, 59)

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

"Flavour, light, touch, sound, fragrance, he who understands the way of these five; in his power is the world."

Parimēl Aḻakar gives the meaning of the couplet:

"The world is within the knowledge of him who by his analytical study understands the five objects of sense i.e., taste, light, odour, touch and sound and their modifications."

His commentary runs as under immediately after the meaning, as translated by Ellis:

"These modifications are—the five particulars here specified, which are the causes of the five elements; the five elements proceeding from them; the five organs of perception and the five of action (the hands, feet, etc.) which are modifications of them; constituting in the whole twenty. The expression-within his knowledge who understands the way-is to be thus explained.

"The soul, which is intelligent by its connection with the body and by its means of intelligence, the active agency of nature, individual consciousness, and the reasoning faculty. These and the cause of these, primitive nature, or homogeneous matter, with those before enumerated, are known as the twenty five Tattwas or principles. That which proceeds immediately from primitive, homogeneous matter is in its nature the generating cause (pagudi), not the generated effect or created object (vigudi); from this proceeds power, or active nature. From this *individual consciousness*; from this the *objects of senses*, or *the sensible species of the elements*; and each of these seven, with respect to that which precedes it, may be considered as the generated

effect, but, with respect to that which proceeds from it, as the generating cause. The reasoning faculty which proceeds from these seven, the organs of sense and of action and the elements, in the whole sixteen, as nothing proceeds from them, must be considered as generated effects, not as generating causes. As the soul does not proceed from anything and nothing proceeds from the soul, it is neither cause, nor effect, neither simple matter, nor any of the diversities produced from it. Whosoever comprehends what is thus taught by the Sangiya school and knows, that, besides the twenty-five, there is no other modifications of principles in the world, by truly knowing the world has it within his power."[28]

W. H. Drew translates the couplet as follows:

"The world is within the knowledge of him who knows the properties of taste, sight, touch, hearing and smell."[29]

VIII

niṛai moḻi māntār perumai nilattu
maṛaimoḻi kāṭṭi viḍum. (28)

The greatness of men of words of depth
The concealed word current in the world will
reveal. (28)

Men of wisdom, supreme in virtue and perfect in conduct, utter words which for all times, are true. 'Word of depth' means words bristling with truth. They are couched indirectly and because of the meaning concealed therein, these are known as 'concealed words.' The word, *niṛai*–full, comes from the root *niṛu*–to stay put, compose. Words, coming from

28. F. W. Ellis: *Aṛappāl.*
29. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ.*

a mind of composure or coming from a mind attuned to peace, are certainly weighty ones and can proclaim only truth. As such weighty words may be taken in lighter vein and ignored due to indifference, they are said with a concealed meaning. Of the nine words in this couplet, five words occur *verbatim* in a sūtra in *Tolkāppiyam–niṟai moḻi* and *māntar maṟai moḻi*, wherein *mantiram* is defined.

> Mantiram is only the concealed word
> Which comes as commandment of men of words depth." [30]

'Men of words of depth' has been explained by Pērāciriyar, commentator of the *Tolkāppiyam* as words of those with an ability to tell in such a way that the meaning cannot be distorted. *Mantiram* has also been explained by the same commentator as words of commandment, ununderstandable to undesirables, said in a concealed manner.

Words bristling full with meaning, be they of benediction or of malediction are fulfilled according to Parimēl Aḻakar's commentary.

The Sanskrit *Vēdas* are a concealed book, not open to recitation by all. In Tamil, they are known as *maṟai*, that which is concealed. In course of time, the term has come to be used for all sacred books or sayings. Sacred utterances current in the land during the time are most probably indicated by the phrase, *nilattu maṟai moḻi*. The greatness of the men of virtue is reflected in the current usage of the words by the people, influenced by their teachings. Such words are indicative of the greatness of the men of

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30. niṟai moḻi māntar āṇaiyiṟ kiḷanta
maṟai moḻi tānē mantiram enpa.
(*Tolkāppiyam*, *Poruḷatikāram ceyyuḷiyal*—176)

pregnant wisdom. This can be taken to be the simple but true meaning of the couplet. With regard to the concealed meaning, the snag is whether Tiruvaḷḷuvar, the universal teacher would have ever meant the venerable men to keep away their teachings from a section of the people. '*Maṛai moḻi*' may be taken to be the 'sacred words', lofty as the scriptures.

G. U. Pope translates the couplet as under:

"The might of men, whose word is never vain
The 'secret word' shall to the earth proclaim."[31]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

"The greatness of the men of the full word (whose words never lack fulfilment) on this earth, the word of mystery points out."

W. H. Drew renders the couplet as follows:

"The hidden words of the men whose words are full, will shew their greatness to the world."[32]

IX

kuṇamennum kuntṟēṟi nintṟār vekuḷi
kaṇamēyum kāttal aritu. (29)

It is impossible to stand even for a moment
The wrath of those, who, having ascended the summit of righteousness,
Stand on it.

This couplet is given two different meanings, dependant on the sense of the word '*aritu*' which comes from the root, *aru*—difficult to do; *aru* also

31. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*
32. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ.*

means *not*. Similarly to a lesser extent, there is the phrase *kaṇamēyum*, meaning even for a moment. There is another reading in which *kaṇamēnum* occurs. This word means then 'for the duration of a second.' Parimēl Aḻakar and Maṇakkudavar subscribe to the view that men of righteousness who are atop all virtue and good conduct, are not free from anger, though for a moment, which it is impossible to bear. Paritiyār, Kālinkar and the Old Commentary say that anger has no place in holy men even for a moment. There is a third crucial word in this couplet, *kāttal*—protection. It comes from the root *kā*, to defend, to bear, to protect, to keep.

To be more precise, this couplet lends itself to two meanings, one the very opposite of the other. But there is agreement on the point of the greatness of ascetics at the very summit of righteous conduct.

1. The wrath of those who have ascended the summit of righteousness and stand firm cannot be endured even for a moment.

2. There is no anger in those who stand on the very hillock of virtue.

A. Chakravarti's translation is a via media between the two interpretations: "The wrath of those who have climbed 'the hill of excellence' and stand firm cannot endure even for a moment." [33]

W. H. Drew translates the couplet thus:

> "The anger of those who have ascended the mountain of goodness, though it continue but for a moment, cannot be resisted." [34]

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33. A. Chakravarthi: *Tirukkuṟaḷ with English Translation and Commentary and An Introduction.*

34. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṟaḷ.*

Translating the couplet as under,

> " The wrath it's hard e'en for an instant to endure
> Of those who virtue's hill have scaled and stand
> secure",

G. U. Pope observes: "But a Jain saint could not have 'wrath' as in couplet 9; nor is couplet 5 quite consistent with Jain doctrines, though the poet may refer to a current story without accepting it." [35]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> " It is hard even for a moment to endure the wrath of those who have climbed the hill of virtue and taken their stand there."

Commentaries of Parimēl Aḻakar, Maṇakkudavar, Paritiyār and Kālinkar and the Old Commentary are given below:

Parimēl Aḻakar:

Their excellence is a hill, for it is exalted and immovable. As it comes of old, even while wrath appears once in a way, and as awareness of good conduct destroys it instantaneously, the author uses the words 'for a moment' and as pregnant words of men of virtue are fulfilled, he uses the words 'it is impossible to stand.

Maṇakkudavar:

It is not possible to withstand the disaster flowing from the wrath of those standing on the hill of virtue, though for a second.

Old Commentary:

Those standing on the hill of virtue do not entertain anger even for a second any day.

35. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṟaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

Paritīyār :

Those standing at the summit of righteousness do not sustain anger even for a moment.

Kālinkar :

The qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas, lust, anger and ignorance, heat and cold, pain and pleasure, glory and infamy—crossing these mountains, those who stand in the eternal bliss of release—those renounced men—the anger cannot keep them within it even for a short while.

Only he who eschews anger can be a sage. Anger can have nothing to do with him, however, short its duration may be. Anger and virtue are the very antithesis of each other. This is one school of thought.

The other school is : Even sages cannot be pacific. How can one compromise with evil? Evil has to be fought. Men of virtue burst into anger when injustice is perpetrated on humanity. They become volcanic even. But such eruption is only for a short duration and passes off in the fleet of a second.

A. Chakravarti's views are:

"In the case of this couplet also some commentators have entirely misunderstood the implication. What is intended here is that the emotion of anger does not appear at all in the case of great ascetics who have climbed up the hill of righteousness by the method of strict self-discipline leading to spiritual development. Occasionally it may appear in their consciousness, but it may flicker away in a moment. The anger which may disturb the ordinary man and influence his conduct deleteriously will just appear in the consciousness of a great ascetic and disappear in the same moment without in

any way affecting the peace and harmony of his soul."

That even the gracious men who have renounced are put out may be inferred from the following couplets:

* "Destruction to his foes, to friends increase of joy,
The 'penitent' can cause, if this his thoughts employ."[36]

* "Though every royal gift, and stores of wealth your life should crown
What are they, if the worthy men of mighty virtue frown."[37]

Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence could not contain himself at one time and expressed his dissatisfaction in no uncertain terms to the representative of a great empire. He wrote on the New Year eve, 1942. to Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy of India: "This is a very personal letter. Contrary to the biblical injunction, I have allowed many suns to set on a quarrel I have harboured against you, but I must not allow the old year to expire without disburdening myself of what is rankling in my breast against you."[38] Great souls get annoyed, of course, but only for a short while.

X

antaṉar eṉpōr aṟavōrmat tṟevvuyirkkum
centaṇmai pūndoḻuka lāṉ. (30)

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* G. U. Pope's translation.

36. onnart teṟalum uvantārai ākkalum
eṇṇil tavattāṉ varum. (*Tirukkuṟaḷ*, 264)

37. vakaimānda vaḻkkaiyum vāṉporuḷum eṉṉām
takaimānda takkār ceṟin. (*Tirukkuṟaḷ*, 897)

38. *Correspondence with Mr. Gandhi*—August 1942 to April 1944. Published by the Manager of Publications, Delhi.

The good and compassionate are those of virtue,
As they continue to have benign compassion on
all life. (30)

Tiruvaḷḷuvar defines the virtuous. Only those can be said to be good and handsome, who are virtuous. External beauty is not meant here but internal purity of a person who has a longing for love for his fellow beings and tenderness and is as cool as the water in the springs. 'Coolness' must not be interpreted following the usage in English and other European languages. Tenderness, grace, mercy, kindness and all good qualities and attributes are always said to be cool and refreshing. Men of virtue are described so, because of their beautiful qualities of grace and mercy. Not only that. They justify being called gracious and virtuous, because they continue to stick to a code of bestowing love on all living beings, both man and animal. By '*Antaṇan*' in singular is indicated only God by Tiruvaḷḷuvar. Parimēl Aḻakar has interpreted the plural '*antaṇar*' to denote those who have renounced, those of virtue. Maṇakkudavar, mostly rational, interprets that those called '*antaṇar*' are men of virtue taken to indicate Brahmans. The *Kuṛaḷ* is a work which eschews race, caste and language. Nowhere else in this great work can one come across the words '*Tamiḻ*' or "*Tamiḻnādu*". It is far-fetched, rather presumptuous to attribute such ideas to a universal teacher. This term used for 'Brahmans' some what loosely by commentators and attributing the word to refer to a particular section of society cannot stand the test of analysis or scrutiny.

M. S. Purnalingam Pillai follows Parimēl Aḻakar in his translation, but is vague: "*Antaṇars* are ascetics who behave graciously towards all other lives."[39] Pope and Graul also commit the mistake of

39. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai: *The Kuṛaḷ in English.*

making Tiruvaḷḷuvar think on lines with what are presumed during their times rather than giving the connotation prevailing during Tiruvaḷḷuvar's time. Caste was not a force in South India at the time when Tiruvaḷḷuvar lived and birth was no badge of superiority or inferiority.

Pope says: "It 'antaṇar' is applied to God and to Brahmans also. There is (Graul thinks) a hit at these latter, who relied more on birth than on 'fair and loving' grace of character. The poet shows how men are to deserve a title which is given to the Supreme Himself."[40]

'Antaṇar'—those of fair grace and 'aṛavōr'—those of virtue are interchangeable terms and denote, those who have renounced. Men of renunciation cannot, however, be strictly compartmentalised under the term 'ascetics'. As has been explained earlier, the term refers to those who have renounced impurities of mind.

'Antaṇar' is taken by Naccinārkkiniyar, the celebrated commentator as those who practise *anta*, which stands for *vēdānta*. He has also described *antaṇar* as those who see (*pārppār*) at all times *vēdanta*. *Pārppār*, according to modern connotation and usage, refers to Brahmans. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai's words are worth quoting in this connection: "The Vēdantist, the Siddhāntist, the Buddhist, the Jain, the Christian—these men quite unconsciously interpret the couplets according to their natural, notional or cultural bias. The Vēdantist will find Varṇaśrama Dharma in plain distiches and make out *Antaṇar* as Brahmin, despite the definition given by the poet himself in this poem and the explicit mention of

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40. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

antaṇar and *pārppār* in Tolkāppiyam as the names of two separate orders of Tamilians with distinctive functions for each in society." [41]

Some English renderings of the couplet are given below:

> "Towards all that breathe, with seemly graciousness adorned they live
> And thus to virtue's sons the name of 'Anthanar' men give." [42] (G. U. Pope)

> "The true Brahmins are the saints, they say,
> For they show kindness to all living creatures." [43] (H. A. Popley)

> "Those who follow the principle of universal
> love and are adored with mercy towards
> all living creatures are called 'andhanar'." [44] (A. Chakravarti)

> "Brahmans are also to be looked upon as men of
> renunciation: for they have compassion on all life." [45] (V. V. S. Aiyar)

> "The Andhanars are men of virtues and of righteous ways
> Since they do always move with every life with loving grace." [46] (K. M. Balasubramaniam)

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41. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai: *The Kuṛaḷ in English.*

42. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyonār.*

43. H. A. Popley: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ.*

44. A. Chakravarti: *Tirukkuṛaḷ with English Translation and Commentary.*

45. V.V.S. Aiyar: The *Kuṛaḷ or The Maxims of Tiruvaḷḷuvar.*

46. K. M. Balasubramaniam: *Tirukkkuṛaḷ with Notes and Comments.*

The virtuous are truly called Andanar;
because in their conduct towards all
creatures they are clothed in kindness.[47]

(W. H. Drew)

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

"The virtuous are *antanar*: for these,
having put on righteous kindliness towards
every living thing, go on in their ordered path."

47. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṟaḷ*.

CHAPTER V

EMPHASISING THE EFFICACY OF VIRTUE

This chapter heading has also been, as usual, translated differently by the various translators. Ellis and Pope give the heading as 'On the power of Virtue' and 'Assertion of the Strength of Virtue' respectively. Ellis writes on the title: "The title of this Chapter is composed of the terms *aṟam*-virtue, *vali*-strength, power and *uṟuttal*-to cause, originate, and signifies the source whence the power of virtue is derived."[1] *Aṟam*, more popular, but *aṟan* more pleasing, is a term which is untranslatable. For lack of a better word, *virtue* is the word used for it by scholars in English. C. Rajagopalachari takes it that "the word *aṟam* is the Tamil equivalent of the Sanskrit word, *dharma*, for which there is no single word equivalent in English. Duty, virtue and other such words do not really cover the full import of either *aṟam* or *dharma*.[2] To cite again Ellis, "The word here employed *aṟam* coinciding nearly with the Sanskrit word, *dharma*, which is frequently substituted for it, possesses great latitude of meaning. It signifies virtue generally; moral right as opposed to wrong; religious *righteousness* and the merit resulting from religious acts; the *positive rights* of things and persons, as ordained by law or established by custom, and the maintenance of such rights or justice; and lastly *charity* in the abstract and charitable acts of every description."[3]

Aṟam comes from the root *aṟu*, to cut. The wild growth in the inner and outer activities of

1. F. W. Ellis: *Aṟappāl*.
2. C. Rajagopalachari: *Kuṟal*.
3. F. W. Ellis: *Aṟappāl*.

man has to be tested and those detrimental not in consonance with healthy progress cut off or pruned. K. Kothandapani Pillai discusses the difference between *aṛam* and *dharma*.

> " *Aṛam* is one of natural growth, congenial to the soil purified and held aloft to guide the future human conduct to achieve the ultimate aims of life. Far different seems to be the origin of the concept of Sanskrit *dharma*. Rabindranath Tagore explains the concept of dharma: 'The specific meaning of *dharma* is that principle which holds us firm together and leads to our best welfare. The general meaning of this word is the essential quality of a thing.' This definition accords with the root meaning of the word *dharma* from the root *dhr*, which means *hold together*. Holding up firm, indicates an apparent basic lack of cohesion and the *dharma* conceived was obviously necessary to bind together firm, diverse groups and interests into a homogeneous whole. It contained, apparently, elements which were super-imposed-not one of natural growth—to rectify the lack of cohesion necessitated by the changing order of society. The code of laws of human conduct based on the principles of holding together heterogeneous elements, the *dharma*, lead the other aims of life pushing them into its background. The ancient Tamilians never allowed this to happen. * * * * * The code of human conduct, *aṛam* has to be pruned to be suitable to the altered progress or changing circumstances. Thus *inpam*, the human happiness was the aim wlth reference to which the pruning had to be done, so that *aṛam* may lead to human happiness and nothing else. Human happiness thus controlled human conduct and shaped it from time to time. *Aṛam* may change from time to time; but the aims of life should never change, was the principle which

guided the ancients. Thus *aṛam* and *dharma* differ not only in the very basis of their concept, but differ widely in their nature, their contents and the results they yielded." [4]

It is worth scanning the commentaries of the *Kuṛaḷ* with regard to *aṛam*. The versatile Parimēl Aḻakar, has not used the word '*dharma*' for explaining the word '*aṛam*' anywhere in the Chapter. So also is the case with Maṇakkudavar. Paritiyār and the Old Commentary use the word '*dharma*'.

Parimēl Aḻakar writes about the title of the chapter: "Of the three divisions spoken of by the sage unlike the other two, as virtue bestows the effects of the present, the future and heavenly bliss, its efficacy is herein explained and the purport of the chapter said accordingly." He quotes in support from *Puṛananuṛu*, 31: "As ordained with distinction, just like wealth and happiness treading the path of virtue." There is nothing else stabler than virtue. Maṇakkudavar interprets the title to mean that "Virtue has power. Because of this the author has given out the reason for saying first about the division of virtue. As virtue is the very life-breath for the sages said heretofore, this has been placed after that." Paritiyār and the Old Commentary calls it as the "Strength of Virtue." T. V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar divides this Chapter into four parts dealing with (1) Greatness of virtue, (2) Implication of virtue (3) Practice of virtue and (4) Results flowing from virtue.[5] This chapter has greatly captivated European students of the *Kuṛaḷ*. Pope is

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4. K. Kothandapani Pillai: *Tirukkuṛaḷ — Kāmattuppāl* (Sornammal Endowment Lec.ure, 1962—University of Madras.)

5. T. V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar: *Tirukkuṛaḷ Virivurai —Pāyiram.*

all admiration. He writes: "As to the teaching of this chapter, compare the Gita (Ch. XVIII). Action is not to be forsaken. Ascetics are great; but in the performance of virtuous deeds men obtain their highest enjoyments and merit the greatest rewards. This chapter contains a loftier moral than any Hindu composition—at least of earlier date." [6]

I

cirappīnum celvamum īnum aṛattinūuṅku
ākkam evanō uyirkku. (31)

It will bestow glory and will also bring wealth.
What else can be a better prosperity to living beings
Than that of virtue?

Practice of virtue brings in its wake wealth which may pertain to worldly wealth and acquisition of knowledge. A learned man is supposed to possess 'indestructible wealth' which cannot be stolen away and the more it is distributed the more it grows. He who is learned is the really handsome person. Because of wealth, the way is paved to the state of eternal beatitude. Parimel Aḻakar takes the couplet to mean that virtue will bring final release and temporary pleasures of heaven. Maṇakkudavar says: "It will give 'final release' and wealth. Hence there is no greater wealth than this to living beings. That prosperity is got because of wealth is contradicted and it is said virtue is powerful."

"Is there a greater deity than that of virtue which gets final release in the future and wealth at present?" (Maṇakkudavar and Old Commentary)

6. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

F. W. Ellis translates the couplet thus:

"What more doth profit man than virtue doth,
By which felicity is given, and whence
Eternal bliss ensues?"[7]

G. U. Pope's translation is direct and simple, not involved.

"It yields distinction, yields prosperity; what gain
Greater than virtue can a living man obtain?"[8]

Tiruvaḷḷuvar asks: "Is there a greater gain, asset, wealth, than that of virtue?" He answers the same with a definite assertion in the next couplet. Growing prosperity is said as 'ākkam'. *Ākkam* is derived from the word *ākku*—to create, construct, make. Virtue is nothing but creation, action, construction. It is only by constructive action that affluence can be brought about. Prosperity is not something to be invoked or prayed for. It can flow only out of hard labour, not by self-glory or propitiating ego, but is for suffering humanity to benefit more. It is only by the practice of virtue that prosperity, as the word itself signifies, can have growing sustenance.

M. S. Purnalingam Pillai's translation gives the same meaning as that of Pope's.

"Virtue yields glory and wealth, What greater gain is there for human life than that?"[9]

'Ciṛappu' has been taken by W. H. Drew as 'heaven' and his translaton is as under:

"Virtue will confer heaven and wealth; what greater source of happiness can man possess?"[10]

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7. F. W. Ellis: *Aṛappāl.*
8. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*
9. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai: *The Kuṛaḷ in English.*
10. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the*Kuṛaḷ.*

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

"It yields distinction, and it yields happiness:
than virtue what greater acquisition in life?"

II

aṛattinūuṅku ākkamum illai atanai
maṛattalin ūṅkillai kēdu. (32)

There is no greater asset than virtue
And no greater evil than forgetting it. (32)

This couplet corroborates the idea contained in the preceding couplet and is assertive. It adds something more by way of warning the disastrous effect of not practising virtue. This cannot be considered a repetition of the idea said in the earlier couplet, as both the positive as well as the negative aspect of the practice of virtue is said and the emphasis laid on the former. The positive gains as a result of the practice of virtue are wealth, happiness and prosperity. On the negative side poverty, sorrow, degeneration and the like will afflict the life of man. Virtue not only illumines the inner side of man but also is a source of strength in the onward march in the life of man.

F. W. Ellis translates the couplet as under:

"No greater gain than virtue can'st thou know,
Than virtue to forget no greater loss."[11]

Pope's translation runs as follows:

"No greater gain than virtue aught can cause;
No greater loss than life oblivious of her laws."[12]

11. F. W. Ellis: *Aṛappāl.*
12. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

"Than virtue there is no higher acquisition;
than forgetfulness of it no deeper destruction."

W. H. Drew's translation also is direct and simple:

"There can be no greater source of good than the practice of virtue; there can be no greater source of evil than the forgetfulness of it." [13]

The evil effect of not practising virtue is said in this couplet. In short, virtuous deeds bring prosperity, and others bring calamity and sorrow.

III

ollum vakaiyāṉ aṟavinaī ōvatē
cellumvāy ellām ceyal. (33)

To the utmost extent within your capacity
Practise virtue uninterruptedly
Wherever it can be practised. (33)

Parimēl Aḻakar interprets the words—*to the utmost extent within your capacity*—that the practice of domestic virtue is dependent on the availability of resources and ascetic virtue on the condition of the body. This has to be practised in thought, word and deed. The virtues pertaining to these are: pure thought, pure word and pure action. The way for the practice of virtue is said in this couplet.

G. U. Pope translates the couplet thus:

"To finish virtue's work with ceaseless effort strive.
What way thou may'st, where'er thou see'st the work may thrive."

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13. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṟaḷ*

He quotes the following for comparison :

> "With the mind by thinking good thoughts; with mouth by speaking good words; with the body by doing good acts. (Eccles. IX, 10)[14]

W. H. Drew has brought out in his translation the import of the couplet in as best a manner as possible.

> "As much as possible, in every way, incessantly practise virtue."[15]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows :

> "In every possible way, ceaselessly whenever opportunity is afforded, do deeds of virtue."

K. M. Balasubramaniam has cited in his *Tirukkuṛaḷ with Notes and Comments*, a fine quotation of John Wesley :

> "Do all the good you can,
> By all the means you can,
> In all the ways you can,
> In all the places you can,
> At all the times you can,
> As long as ever you can."[16]

A few Tamil quotations given below are of benefit in understanding the couplet :

> *"This day? That day? What day? question not the time
> Bethink thee death behind thee waiting ever stands?

14. G. U. Pope : *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

15. W. H. Drew : An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ.*

16. K. M. Balasubramaniam : *Tirukkuṛaḷ with Notes & Comments.*

* G. U. Pope's translation.

Put from you every evil thing, with all your powers
Embrace the virtue sages teach."[17]

† " Easy to all to offer in worship a green leaf to the Lord,
Easy to all to give a mouthful to the cow,
Easy to all to give a handful sitting down to eat,
Easy to all, good, kind words on others to bestow."[18]

" Practice of virtue is sweet to the foremost, because of its efficacy."[19]

IV

manattukkaṉ mācilan ātal anaittaṟan
ākula nīra piṟa. (34)

Being spotless in mind is virtue suffice ;
All else has the quality of sound and show. (34)

Tiruvaḷḷuvar defines virtue here. Purity of mind is the bed-rock of virtue. Only if the inner self is pure and spotless, the actions flowing out can be virtue oriented. Being spotless in mind is only virtue. Everything else is but ostentation and a mere show. Though the meaning of the couplet is given in different

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17. intṟu kol antṟu kol entṟu kol ennātu
pintṟaiyē nintṟatu kūttṟam entṟeṉṉi
oruvumin tīyavai ollum vakaiyān
maruvumin māndār aṟam. (*Nāladiyār*, 36)

18. yāvarkkumām iṟaivarkkoru paccilai
yāvarkkumām pacuvukkoru vāyuṟai
yāvarkkumām uṇṇum potoru kaippidi
yāvarkkumām piṟarkkinnurai tānē.
(*Tirumantiram*, 254)

19. āttṟum tuṇaiyil aṟam ceykai munninitē.
(*Iniyavai nāṟpatu*, 7)

† B. Natarajan's translation.

ways by the commentators, there is an inherent unity in them. "Let the person who practises virtue be spotless in his mind. That is but virtue," says Parimēl Aḷakar. "All virtue is that one must be spotless in mind," is Maṇakkudavar's commentary. Paritiyār says in his interpretation: "Let no sin be thought in mind. That is sufficient. There then is no need to practise virtue." 'Being spotless in mind' is also taken to indicate being free of mental dirt. There is not much of a different meaning involved in this.

F. W. Ellis translates the couplet as under:

"That which in spotless purity preserves
The mind is real virtue; all besides
Is evanescent sound."[20]

The commentators cannot but interpret the couplet almost alike. Of the English translations it is Pope's which has gained currency and become oft quoted.

"Spotless be thou in mind! This only merits virtue's name;
All else, mere pomp of idle sound, no real worth can claim."[21]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

"In mind be 'spotless!' So much is virtue.
All else is empty noise." (Comp. Gita, XVI, 1)

W. H. Drew has brought out the meaning of the couplet clearly in his translation, though not with the same force as in that of Pope:

"Whatever is done with a spotless mind is virtue; all else is vain show."[22]

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20. F. W. Ellis: *Aṛappāl.*
21. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*
22. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ.*

Purity of mind is the foundation from which alone love flows. It can perennially flow and rid humanity of the many ills plaguing it.

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God,"[23] is what Christ said. How strangely it coincides with what Maṇikkavācakar sings in the same vein: "Will not the pure in heart sing of our Lord Sivan?"* Men of God and leaders of humanity have never deviated from keeping their minds clean, spotless and pure. Of the 1,330 couplets, this one alone is sufficient to prove to mankind that here is a universal teacher, talking in the simplest language the loftiest of truths. Commendation of the purity of thought is not the monopoly of the teaching of this or that denomination or faith, but it has been universally held and taught by the seers of the world. This idea is re-iterated later in a couplet by Tiru-vaḷḷuvar. What if one's stature grows as high as the sky, if he is guilty in his mind? Purity of mind is the pivot on which hinges the entire fabric of one's conduct.

> "What gain, though virtue's semblance high as heaven his fame exalt,
> If heart dies down through sense of self-detected fault."[24]

V

aḻukkāṟu avāvekuḷi innāccol nāṅkum
iḻukkā iyantṟatu aṟam (35)

Virtue is but the avoidance of the four
Envy, lust, anger and bitter word,
And moving in ordered path.

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23. New Testament.
24. *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, 272.
* *cittam aḻakiyār pādārō nam civanai.*

This is a further definition of virtue. What determines the purity of mind? It is the absence of the despicable four that can pave the atmosphere for purity. Parimēl Aḻakar's rendering of the couplet is simply grand.

" Envy - not tolerant of the prosperity of others,
lust - desire, going after objects of sense,
anger - anger, born as a result towards others,
bitter word - harsh word following that,

virtue is but the avoidance of the four and moving in ordered path.	avoiding these four - what functions uninterruptedly is virtue."

Parimēl Aḻakar adds: "It must be understood that what is diluted of these is not virtue."

Only a mind of dirt, sullied and impure, exhibits the four qualities. In the mirror of purity, nothing is reflected. Only when contaminated of evil thought, they are reflected and are exhibited as envy, greed, wrath and harsh words. The couplet is contributory and complementary to the preceding one :

Pope translates the couplet as under :

" Tis virtue when, his foot steps sliding not through envy, wrath,
Lust, evil speech—these four, and onwards moves in ordered path." [25]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows :

" Virtue is that state which hath walked with foot that slips not through envy, lust, wrath, or evil speech." (Comp. *Bhag. Gita*, XVI, 21)

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25. G. U. Pope : *The Sacred Kuṟaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

W. H. Drew's rendering of the couplet runs as under:

> "That conduct is virtue which is free from these four things, viz., malice, desire, anger and bitter speech."[26]

VI

antṟaṟivām ennātu aṟamceyka mattṟatu
pontṟuṅkāl pontṟa-t tuṇai. (36)

Not thinking, 'We'll do it sometime hence', practise virtue now.
That's a deathless companion at the time of death.' (36)

Virtue must be practised right now. It is not to be postponed or set apart for a particular occasion. Practice of virtue is a continuing process. Affluence or poverty can do no impediment to holding on to virtue. Even once missed, that chance and the circumstantial environment may not repeat again. Though at the giving end he who missed the chance may be eagerly looking forward to the let gone opportunity to grasp it, such an opportunity may not come for ever. And who can be sure of the time of arrival of that certainty called Death? So, the saying goes in Tamil:

*" Do one thing;
Let it be the righteous one!
Let the righteous deed be done today!
Not today, but now."

In this couplet "sometime hence" is bracketed with 'at the time of death' and interpreted to mean

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26. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṟaḷ*.

* ontṟum nantṟē ceyka
nantṟum intṟe ceyka
intṟum innē ceyka.

"not thinking we will do it sometime before death, practise virtue now." This is Parimēl Aḻakar's interpretation. Ellis does not agree with him.

He translates the couplet as under:

> " Refer not virtue to another day;
> Receive her now and at thy dying hour
> She'll prove thy never-dying friend."[27]

His commentary runs as under:

> " Another day—by connecting the word thus translated, *antṛu* that day, with *pontṛuṅkāl*—the time of death, a signification somewhat differing from this version is given to this couplet and it is explained *defer not the practice of virtue until the day of death etc; i.e., fulfil at once all acts of charity on which thou hast resolved, and do not leave them to be performed by others, after they decease.* This, however, is not correct; *antṛu* must be construed absolutely, not relatively, the meaning of the author being that which is indicated by the version I have preferred and which may thus be less literally explained.—*The chief benefits of virtue accruing after death, and the time of death being uncertain, practise virtue now, deferring it to no future day, that thou mayest be certain of enjoying the benefits so accruing.* By substituting "receive" for the literal meaning of *ceyka—do, practise,* the personification is not interrupted."[28]

G. U. Pope translates the couplet thus:

> " Do deeds of virtue now, say not, 'Tomorrow we'll be wise';
> Thus when thou diest, shalt thou find a help that never dies."[29]

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27. F. W. Ellis: *Aṛappāl.*
28. Ibid.
29. Dr. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

W. H. Drew renders the couplet as follows :

> "Say not we will hereafter make choice (of virtue); be virtuous now ; in the hour of death, she will be to you a deathless help." [30]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows :

> "Do deeds of virtue, not saying, 'then we shall know'; that, when thou diest, shall be undying help."

There are some beautiful quotations, being an echo of the couplets, given below for comparison, from Tamil literature :

* "As gain from mortal frame now reached—so hard to reach—
With all thy might lay hold of virtue's lasting good
As juice from cane expressed 'twill after be thine aid,
When body goes like refuse flung away." [31]

* "Say not 'In after time we'll virtue learn ; we're young'.
While wealth is yours, conceal it not ; do virtuous deeds
When evil tempests rage, not ripened fruit alone,
But unripe fruit's fair promise falls." [32]

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30. W. H. Drew : An English Translation of the *Kuṟaḷ*.
31. arum peṟal yākkaiyai-p petṟa payattaṟ
perum payanum āttravē koḷka—karumpūrnta
cāṟu poṟ cālavum pinnutavi mattṟatan
kōtu poṟ pōkum udampu.[21] (*Nāladiyār*, 34)
32. mattṟarivā nalvinai yāmilaḷiyam ennātu
kaittundām poḻtē karavā taṟam ceymin
muttṟi irunta kani oḻiyat tīvaḷiyā
naṟkāy utirtalum undu.[22] (*Nāladiyār*, 19)

* G. U. Pope's translation.

"We'll do acts of virtue to-morrow. If thought so,
The good life may to-day itself perhaps come to an end.
So delineating, few are those who realise this,
In the entire world of antiquity surrounded by water."[33]

VII

aṛattāṟu ituvena vēnda civikai
poruttanōdu ūrntan idai. (37)

What the path of virtue is, needs no telling;
It is both with the palanquin bearer and the rider. (37)

The path of duty is the way to virtue. Be it with the person who rides on the palanquin or with the person who carries it, it is in the discharge of their duties that they are engaged in different occupations. No occupation can be high or low. It depends on aptitudes and opportunities. The chances of leading a life of virtue or treading the path of virtue are the same both with the rider and the bearer of the palanquin.

A diametrically opposite meaning is also given to the couplet. "There is no need to know from the works what the effect of virtue is. It is there for one to witness in the sight of one riding on the palanquin and in the other carrying him", says Parimēl Aḻakar. Paritiyār is still more emphatic. "If an enquiry is to be made of men of virtue and

33. nāḷai-c ceykuvam aṟam enil inṟē
kēḷvi nal uyir nīṅkinum nīṅkum
ituvena varaintu vāḻnāḷ uṇarntōr
mutunīr ulakil muḻuvatum illai.
(*Silappadhikāram, Nadukaṟkātai*, 179–182.)

sinners, see them in the one who rides on the palanquin and the other who carries it."

The crucial word for interpreting the couplet is *āṛu*—cutting, way, path. By stretching, the word also is given the meaning of 'effect."

The different translations in English of the couplet are given below:

> "Needs not in words to dwell on virtue's fruits; compare
> The man in litter borne with them that toiling bear!"[34] (G. U. Pope)

> "The one who bears the palanquin and he who rides therein
> Rule out the need for explaining the virtue's ways and sin."[35] . (K. M. Balasubramaniam)

> "What the way of virtue is needs no saying. It can be seen in the bearer and in the rider of a palanquin."[36] (M. S. Purnalingam Pillai)

> "It is not necessary to dive deep into the scriptures to discover the result of virtuous conduct. It is enough to notice the person who rides in a palanquin and the person who carries the palanquin."[37] (A. Chakravarti)

> "Ask me not, What will profit a man if he is righteous? Look at the bearer of the palanquin and him that rideth on it." (This is the interpretation of this maxim. It is the righteous deeds done in past births that have made the one in the rider, and the unrighteous deeds done in his

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34. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*
35. K. M. Balasubramaniam: *Tirukkuṛaḷ with Notes and Comments.*
36. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai: *The Kuṛaḷ in English.*
37. A Chakravarthi: *Trirukkuṛaḷ.*

past births that have made the other the bearer of the palanquin.)[38] (V. V. S. Aiyar)

"There is no need to say 'This is virtue's way';
Just look at the *palki* rider and its bearer."

(In the case of the bearer and the rider both, their present condition is determined by the deeds done in a former birth.)[39] (H. A. Popley)

"You need not describe (in books) the course of virtue; (point out to the sight) the bearer of a palankeen and him who rides on it.[40]
(W. H. Drew)

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

"When you compare the bearer of the litter
with him who rides therein, you need not
further speak of the tendency of virtue"
(Comp. S. John, IX, 2)

Tiruvaḷḷuvar deals elaborately with 'Destiny' in a separate chapter. The Jains attribute everything to destiny. Curiously, Parimēl Aḻakar in the interpretation of this couplet is completely in agreement with the Jain view that the results of past actions are reflected in the subsequent births. This is a simple damnation of the working class and attributing superiority on account of birth and position. Would a universal teacher like Tiruvaḷḷuvar ever have even dreamt of such a predicament, a pure and simple curse for the sins, deeds of vice supposed to have been committed in previous births as a result of which the palanquin bearer has to carry the rider, the man of virtue in past births? This is

38. V. V. S. Aiyar: *The Maxims of Tiruvaḷḷuvar.*
39. H. A. Popley: *The Sacred Kuṟaḷ.*
40. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṟaḷ.*

one of the rare couplets of Tiruvaḷḷuvar highlighting the dignity of labour. It is a question of duty with both, the rider and the palanquin bearer. It is nothing short of attributing foul meanings to a universal teacher that it was due to one's past deeds one suffers in the world. Can this come from a a society which has produced a Sangam poet who declares,

> " We don't stand in awe at the great
> Nor do we run down the lesser ones still
> more ?"[41]

The interpretation of the couplet from the Jain point of view as given by A. Chakravarthi is as follows:

> " The obvious fact that some persons have the good fortune to be carried in a palanquin by other persons who have to toil along the path with the load of the palanquin on the shoulders, would make it distinctly clear what the result of virtuous conduct would be, because the experience of *these two individuals is but the result of their* former conduct in a past birth; one by his good deed is able to obtain the happiness of riding in a palanquin and the other because of the lack of it is condemned to work hard by having to carry the palanquin. This fact which one can observe in life is enough to emphasise the importance of good conduct whose value *need not be esta*blished by elaborately citing verses from the scriptures."[42]

Inequalities in the standards of living can never be done away with if the outmoded idea of attributing

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41. *periyōrai viyattatum ilamē,*
ciṟiyōrai ikaḻtal ataninum ilamē. (*Puṟanāṉūṟu*, 192)

42. A. Chakravarthi: *Tirukkuṟaḷ.*

sufferings or vocations to the results of past actions in previous births and putting the same in the mouth of a world teacher are entertained. The palanquin incident cannot be cited as authority and this has been questioned by the saint poet, Sivaprakāsar. The child-saint Tiruñānasambandar was being carried in a palanquin by his devoted admirers. On the way, the venerable old saint Tirunāvukkarasar joined them and, without the child saint knowing, was one of the palanquin bearers. When the destination was reached the child saint much to his horror found that Tirunāvukkarasar, the father like figure and a great devotee of Siva had been carrying him on his shoulders. Out of love the elder saint carried the child saint. Can any one say that because of their actions in past births, one was the rider in and the other was the bearer of the palanquin? Another instance of recent happening may also be of interest. A prince who was a disciple of Swami Vivekananda used to play the role of a palanquin bearer and make one of his bearers to ride on it, without people knowing, just to demonstrate that it was not the person that counted but only the paraphernalia attached to a prince that mattered.

There is a fine commentary of T. V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar on this couplet. He writes:

> "*Arattāṛu* has been taken to mean *the effect of virtue* and keeping in mind destiny, an exposition is given to the couplet that those who carry the palanquin did unrighteous deeds in past births and those who ride on it, righteous deeds. Giving the meaning of the couplet with destiny in mind involves birth in high and low places.
>
> "That creates conflicts. Not that the author did not believe in destiny. He has devoted a separate chapter to it. But destiny does not find a place

> here. Brushing aside destiny, taking the straight meaning of 'way of virtue' or 'code of virtue' for *aṟattāṟu*, it is more appropriate to hold that the path of virtue is common both to the bearer and the rider of the palanquin. Those who carry the palanquin are but men and those that ride are also men. Both are engaged in professions in which virtuous conduct exists for all types of men, varied though the professions be. Virtuous conduct does not shrink while at the time of carrying the palanquin nor does it expand while riding. Palanquin bearers too, if they adhere to righteous path, can be virtuous and the riders too, if they adhere to the same path be so. The chances to be virtuous are even to both. They are not restricted to one set only. The path of virtue is not such as to be exclusive to and lean on one side."[43]

No ethical teacher will give the dog a bad name and hang it. Every one is a spark of the divine. Hearts of great reformers like Rāmānuja, Swami Vivēkānanda and Mahātmā Gāndhi bled for the lowliest and wanted them to come up. If the supposed sins of earlier births pursue them like hounds pursuing their prey, where then is the redemption for the unfortunate and the lesser placed souls? Rāmānuja helped thousands to come up the social ladder. He wanted the entire population to become devotees of Nārāyaṇa. He told his followers that though the waters of the Cauvery only washed his body clean, his mind was cleansed by the touch of devotees of Nārāyaṇa, whatever be their birth or social position. When Rāmānuja was taking a round of the holy shrine at the birth place of Tirumangai Alwâr, he met a *candāla* woman approaching him. When he

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43. T. V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar: *Tirukkuṟaḷ Virivurai Pāyiram.*

asked her to move away to make way for him, she, without moving said to him, "Sire, which side shall I move? There is purity all about me here, which side then can my impurity turn?" Rāmānuja struck dumb at the answer from an unexpected quarter said, "Forgive me, madam, I have offended thee for all that thou art holier than myself."[44] Such incidents in the lives of great teachers of humanity occur every now and then to highlight virtue. A noble idea of Tiruvaḷḷuvar, the universal teacher may not continue to be twisted whatever the intellectual attainments of the commentators.

VIII

vīḻnaḷ padāmai nantṛāttṛin ahtoruvan
vaḻnāḷ vaḻiyadaikkum kal. (38)

If good is done with not a day falling waste
That is the stone which blocks the passage
To future births.

Man always yearns for final release. Rightly or wrongly he believes in births and release is understood by him as a state wherein he does not undergo the pangs of birth and death. With not a day going in default, if virtue is practised for the good of society, the problems of the chain of births and deaths is overcome once for all. That is the stone which blocks the passage called birth and prevents the man of virtue from sliding down it. Virtue is not practised for the sole purpose of enjoying the results in this world nor for fame and position. Material prosperity for self alone will take one to greed, avarice and aggrandisement. If prosperity and affluence are put to use for the well-being of

44. M. Yamunacharya: *Ramanuja's Teachings in His Own Words.*

society and for the uplift of the downtrodden, the poorest, lowliest and last, the satisfaction the man of virtue gains thereby is the greatest wealth for him. Virtue will see to it that such a man does not undergo the sufferings of birth and ensure for him final release.

Parimēl Aḻakar gives the meaning that if one practises virtue with not a day being lost, that act will be the stone blocking the way of the day of living when he is to join a body.

He says in his commentary: "It is called the day of life as the soul in collusion with the body enjoys the results of good and bad deeds proceeding from the five faults. Those are: ignorance, ego, greed, attachment and aversion, which are called *panca-klēsam* by Sankritists. The two acts are good and bad deeds. The two effects or results are pleasure and sorrows. Hence it is said that virtue will get for one final release."

G. U. Pope translates the couplet in the following words:

> "If no day passing idly, good to each day you toil,
> A stone 't will be to block the way of future days of moil"[45]

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> "If he do good, suffering no day to fall profitless, that will be a stone which will close up the way of living days."

He has quoted from *Old Pictures in Florence*, XXI of Browning for comparison.

> "There is a fancy some lean to and others hate—
> That when this life is ended, begins

45. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins:
"Where the strong and the weak, this world's congeries,
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's all."

* * *

"Yet I hardly know.................................
Why the child grows man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labour are surely done;
There remaineth a rest for the people of God;
And I have had trouble enough for one."

M. S. Purnalingam Pillai's translation runs as follows:

> "If virtue be practised incessantly, without losing a day, it will like a stone, block up the way of future life."[46]

W. H. Drew renders the couplet as given under:

> "He who suffers no day to pass unimproved, but continually does some good, such conduct will be a stone to stop the approach of other births."[47]

T. V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar's commentary strikes a note different from the others. Blocking stone—*adaikkum kal* is taken by him to mean the stone that is laid on the path of life, *Vīḻnāḷ* has been given the meaning 'the dying day.' The meaning given by him of the couplet is: "If one practises virtuous acts without dying, that is the stone laid for the pathway of his life." This in effect conveys the meaning that one becomes immortal by his virtuous acts and even when alive, such act is the paved stone during his life to walk on. The other point he has made in the couplet is the use of the word *oruvan*, the

46. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai: *The Kuṛaḷ in English.*
47. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṛaḷ.*

masculine singular for *one*. When man practises virtue, his wife too joins him. As generally it is man that slips in life, the author has, as a sort of forewarning, used the masculine gender.[48]

IX

aṟattāṉ varuvatē iṉpamattṟ ellām
puṟatta pukaḻum ila. (39)

That which flows out of only virtue is happiness;
All else is contrary to it and devoid of praise. (39)

Happiness in life is assured if one practises virtue. Happiness is a result of one's deeds of virtue. Deeds other than those of virtue are detrimental and cannot be commended. Such deeds deserve condemnation and will not bring any word of praise from men of virtue. None would like to shun happiness. Happiness is sought after unlike misery. The seeming happiness one gets out of acts of sin and exploitation is no happiness at all. It will culminate only in disaster.

The Old Commentary interprets that happiness flowing out of virtue only is real happiness. Others have no content in them nor will get praise. "Whether it is this worldly or other worldly, the best of happiness is derived only from domestic virtue. Others are opposed to this and cannot be commended", says Kālinkar. Parimēl Aḻakar too takes virtue as domestic virtue and his commentary is not different from that of Kālinkar. It is not understood why Parimēl Aḻakar and Kālinkar take virtue, which is inclusive of domestic virtue also, to be so.

48. T. V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar: *Tirukkuṟaḷ Virivurai-Pāyiram.*

Ellis translates the couplet thus:

" Pleasure from virtue springs, from all but this
No real pleasure ever ensues, nor praise."[49]

He has translated the word *inpam* as pleasure. He says: "Under the term *inpam* from *in*—sweet, is included every species of gratification, mental or any other state of existence, it is distinguished from *celvam* used in the first verse of this chapter, by describing the *feeling* instead of the *state* of happiness. In composition with *cittṛu* - small, *cittṛinpam*, the word is idiomatically used to signify the base pleasures of the material world and composition with *pēr* - great *pērinpam* the higher joys of eternity."[50]

It needs no telling that Ellis has followed the meaning given by Parimēl Aḻakar. "*Aṛattān varuvatē inpam*" has been interpreted by Parimēl Aḻakar as pleasure derived in close unison with domestic virtue. In spite of his scholarly commentary, Parimēl Aḻakar goes frequently out of the way to draw involved meanings, complicated and confusing. Domestic virtue and ascetic virtue are dealt with separately later and it is but proper that in the introduction these points which are common to both are dwelt upon and not points exclusively relating to domestic virtue.

G. U. Pope's translation does not follow Parimēl Aḻakar and conforms to what is given in the beginning:

" What from virtue floweth, yieldeth dear delight;
All else extern, is void of glory's light."[51]

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49. F. W. Ellis: *Aṛappāl.*
50. Ibid.
51. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṛaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> "What comes through virtue is pleasure: all
> else are outside of it, and are void of praise."

M. S. Purnalingam Pillai's rendering is after Parimēl Aḻakar's interpretation:

> "Pleasure accrues from domestic virtue alone
> All the rest yields no pleasure and deserves no praise."[52]

W. H. Drew also follows suit. He translates:

> "That pleasure only which flows from virtue is pleasure; all else is not pleasure and it is without praise."[53]

Translations of the *Kuṛaḷ* mostly suffer from interpretations. Strictly, they are expositions and not exact renderings.

Maṇakkudavar gives the meaning of the couplet that "those flowing out of virtue are happiness and glory. Those not flowing out of it are misery and devoid of praise."

X

ceyaṛ pālatu ōrum aṛane oruvarkku
uyaṛpālatu ōrum paḻi. (40)

> That which deserves to be practised by one is only virtue;
> And deserves to be done away with is only evil." (40)

Virtue is to be practised and vice shunned. Tiruvaḷḷuvar, to be definite, has said what is to be done and what is to be done away with. But in both, one has to exercise some caution.

52. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai: *The Kuṛaḷ in English.*
53. W. H. Drew: An English translation of the *Kuṛaḷ.*

Manakkudavar's commentary is as follows:

> "That which ought to be practised by one is virtue; that which one must escape from is vice. The auther has said that births will be snapped by practising virtue. With that, he says here that with doing evil deeds, those will not be snapped."

Ellis translates the couplet thus:

> "Know that is virtue which each ought to do;
> What each should shun is vice."[54]

Pope's translation is as under:

> "'Virtue' sums the things that should be done;
> 'Vice' sums the things that man should shun."[55]

He writes: "This seems to suppose a natural sense of right and wrong in human minds. In Hindu minds this sense is supposed to be affected by destiny, but on the whole is a safe guide (Couplet. 293). The poet believes in natural conscience."

Pope has literally translated the couplet as follows:

> "What is to be placed in the category of
> things to be done is virtue. What should be
> shunned is vice."

W. H. Drew renders the couplet as follows:

> "That which it is meet to do is virtue; that which it is meet to abandon is vice."[56]

Of the ten couplets emphasising the efficacy of virtue, Tiruvaḷḷuvar defines what virtue is in two couplets (34 and 35). In the rest, he speaks of

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54. F. W. Ellis: *Aṟappāl.*
55. G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kuṟaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār.*
56. W. H. Drew: An English Translation of the *Kuṟaḷ.*

the strength of virtue; (31), the evil befalling those neglecting it; (32), the practice of it at all places to the utmost possible extent incessantly; (33), the deathless companion-like nature of virtue; (36), the practice of virtue by all irrespective of position; (37), virtue as the stone blocking the passage to future births; (38), happiness derived from the practice of virtue; (39) and the necessity to do virtue and shun vice; (40). Tiruvaḷḷuvar insists on the purity of the mind which is virtue; only from such a mind flows acts of goodness for the benefit of society. It is also essential that the practice of virtue is free from envy, avarice, wrath and bitter words and while, in action, sometimes the former two may not be exhibited properly, the latter are seen in one's outward behaviour. The possiblity of all the four finding expression in one's day to day life also is common. Virtue that only is which a spotless mind practicss, not carried away by evil forces of anger and harsh words, lust and envy. *Aṛam*, virtue, *dharma* or for that matter any word, analogous in any language in the world has ingrained in it more than one meaning. As pointed out earlier, the word *aṛam* has a great latitude of meaning. Eight meanings are given to it. But in Tamil literary works, it is mostly used to denote 'good quality' or 'high moral conduct.' It is also used to denote custom, justice, duty, charity, the god of virtue and even religions.[57] What is considered good for most of the human beings is taken as virtue. Even with early Greek thinkers, it was so. I. M. Crombie writes: "The Socratic paradoxes seem to rest on two propositions. Firstly human behaviour is purposive; what people do is determined by the good things they think they can obtain. Secondly if the whole

57. K. D. Tirunavukkarasu: *Tirukkuṛaḷ Nīti Ilakkiyam.*

apparatus of morality is justified, then there must be some good thing which can be obtained by conforming to its requirements; if there were not, morality would be a kind of ritual or etiquette, something we could agree to give up without thereby suffering any serious loss." According to Meno a disciple of Georgias, "virtue is a sharpened version of the common Greek attitude" and it "consists in being adequate to handle the city's business, and in doing so benefit your friends, harm your enemies, and see to it that you are not harmed yourself. Aretê in fact is competence; or rather this is the aretê of a man, for the aretê of a man and a woman are different (hers being to be an obedient house-keeper). In fact every age and type of human being has its specific virtue."[58] This is something startling and is most unethical. This was unacceptable to Socrates to whom that "if all these specific virtues are like virtues they must have something in common. That all human beings who deserve to be called good are good in the same way is shown by the fact that nothing is well done unless it is justly and temporarily done; i.e. there is a unity of pattern in all good behaviour." Man ceases to be man if the theory of the survival of the fittest is made applicable in a civilised society. When man turned round the corner after a primitive life, certain norms came to be recognised as virtues, with a bond of unity and acceptable to the vast majority of mankind. It is said in the *Tolkāppiyam*,

> "The wise men made a code of ethics,
> After falsehood and lapse made their
> appearance."[59]

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58. I. M. Crombie: *An Examination of Plato's Doctrines.*
59. poyyum vaḻuvum tōntṛiya pinnar
aiyar yāttar karaṇam enpa.
(*Tolkāppiyam Poruḷatikāram, Kaṛpiyal*-4)

In all the ethical works of the world and the sayings of world teachers, a certain common element is discernible. Virtue has come to be used in an elastic sense. There is an abuse in the use of the word and the elongation is mainly due to bad people believing and acting intently with their wrong ideas. This conception of goodness is totally different from and opposed to the precepts and practices of the many seers and savants of the world. However grandiose certain practices are shown to be, devoid of the values of life, they have to be detested and shunned. These are concepts which entail the concept of value, and we might say that to these classes of things value is 'essential.' We would call a thing a 'virtue' or a specific sort of virtue such as 'courage', only if it had value (or value in a certain degree)."[60] Hence Tiruvaḷḷuvar has emphasised that virtue has to be practised in thought, word and deed. "Being spotless in mind" and doing away with envy, desire, anger and harsh words is virtue. Also, "the Gīta pleads for inward moral purity. And even in morality it points out how a moral spirit is far superior to individual moral acts. The yogin is one who has set the goal of his life, not in this world, nor in a heaven which he hopes to reach after death, but in a world of spirit of which he is a denizen even, here and now. The Gīta says: 'The sage who has controlled his senses, mind and understanding and who has put away desire, fear and anger and who is ever bent on liberation—he is ever liberated'."[61] "The Gospel from the Sermon on the Mount, that river of divine wisdom, which rising on Christ's lips, flowing from that mountain down all time gives

60. Sidney Zink: *The Concepts of Ethics.*

61. D. S. Sarma: *The Gita and Spiritual Life.*

the direction that the merely outward observance of commandment is altogether inadequate. It is the inward thought, motive, purpose that need to be brought into harmony with God's will."[62] World teachers—Christ, Krishna, Tiruvaḷḷuvar—stress on the purity of mind, the spring from which virtue flows.

Kālinkar who takes the fifth couplet in this chapter as the last explains the necessity for dealing with 'Domestic Life' in the next chapter: "The four chapters in the preface are finished. The chapter on 'The Greatness of Those Who Renounced' has been explained in so far as it relates to ascetic virtue and the chapter on 'Emphasising the Efficacy of Virtue' has been said with regard to domestic virtue. Because of priority in dealing and also because domestic virtue, the auxiliary cause for ascetic virtue, is the source for other virtues, the author takes up domestic life in the ensuing chapter.

62. G. M. Hopkins: *The Sermons and Devotional Writings.*

APPENDIX I

TRANSLITERATION OF THE COUPLETS WITH WORD FOR WORD MEANINGS AND LITERAL MEANINGS FOR THE COUPLETS IN ENGLISH

1

akara mutala eluttellām āti
pakavan mutattrē ulaku.

akaram - the letter "A"
mutala - have as beginning
eluttu - the letter; here, letters indicating the alphabets
ellām - all
āti - the original; the first; the beginning (Skt. ādi)
pakavan - the Deity; the Lord (Skt. Bhagavan)
mutattrē - mutattṛu+ē ; mutattṛu - has as beginning; ē - only
ulaku - the world.

Literal Meaning: All the alphabets have as beginning the letter 'A'; the world has as beginning only the original Lord.

2

kattṛatanāl āya payan en kol vāl aṛivan
nattṛāḷ toḻāar enin.

kattṛatanāl - from that which was learned
āya - which comes
payan - advantage, result, use
en - what
kol - is an expletive, sometimes used as a doubtful interrogation
vāl - pure
aṛivan - He who is knowledge; personification of knowledge

nattṛāḷ - nal + tal
nal - good
tal - feet
toḻāar - is the lengthened form of toḻar
toḻār - (they) do not worship
enin - if

Literal Meaning: What is the advantage which comes from learning if they do not worship the good feet of Him who is Pure Knowledge?

3

malar micai ēkinān māṇadi cērntar
nilamicai nīdu vāḻvār.

malar - a fully blossomed flower
micai - on; over
ēkinān - He who walked
māṇadi - mana + adi
māṇ - lofty
adi - a foot
cērntār - those who reached; those who are united to
nilam - the earth; the world
micai - on
nīdu - for long
vāḻvār - will live.

Literal Meaning: Those who are united to the lofty foot of Him who walked over a fully blossomed flower will live long on earth.

4

vēndutal vēndāmai ilānadi cērntārkku
yāndum idumpai ila.

vēndutal - desiring, indirectly meaning attachment
vēndāmai - not desiring, indirectly meaning aversion

ilān - He who does not possess
adi - foot
cērntārkku - to those who reached ; to those who are united to
yāndum - at any time
idumpai - affliction
ila - is not.

Literal Meaning : There is not affliction, at any time, to those who are united to the foot of Him who does not have attachment or aversion.

5

iruḷcēr iruvinaiyum cēra iṛaivan
poruḷcēr pukaḻ purintār māṭṭu.

iruḷ - darkness
cēr - draw nigh to ; to arrive at ; join oneself to ; to reach
iru - adjectival form of 'two'
vinaiyum - act also ; deed also
cēra - will not reach ; will not come
iṛaivan - the Lord's
poruḷ - meaning
cēr - draw nigh to ; to arrive at ; join oneself to ; to reach
poruḷ cēr - meaningful
pukaḻ - praise
purintār - those who did ; those who exercised ; those who practised
māṭṭu - in or to, used as a preposition.

Literal Meaning : The two acts leading to darkness will not come to those who practised the Lord's meaningful praise.

6

poṛivāyil aintavittān poytīr oḻukka
neṛinintṛār nīduvāḻ vār.

poṛi - the senses i.e., eye, ear, mouth, nose and body
vāyil - the gateway
aintu - five (sight, hearing, eating, smelling and perception)
avittān - He who extinguishes
poy - falsehood
tīr - devoid of ; free from
oḻukkam - ethical code
neṛi - path
nintṛār - those who stand ; those who adhere to
nīdu - long
vaḻvār - shall live.

Literal Meaning: Those who adhere to the path of ethical code of Him free from falsehood who extinguishes the five gateways from the senses shall live long.

7

tanakkuvamai illātān taḷ cērntārkkallāl
manakkavalai māttṛal aritu.

tanakku - to oneself
uvamai - similitude
illātān - he who has not
taḷ - foot
cērntārkku - to those who reached
allāl - other than ; without ; except
mana - of the mind
kavalai - anxiety ; worry ; care
māttṛal - the changing ; doing away
aritu - is impossible ; is difficult

Literal Meaning : Except to those who reached the foot of Him who has no similitude to Himself, it is difficult to do away with the worry of the mind.

8

aṛavāḻi antaṇan tāḷ cērntārk kallāl
piṛavāḻi nīntal aritu.

aṛavāḻi - aram+ali
aṛa - of virtue
āḻi - the ocean
antaṇan - am+taṇ+an. Of He who is gracefully cool, meaning, 'of the merciful'
tāḷ - foot
cērntārkku - to those who reached
allāl - other than; without; except
piṛavāḻi - piṛa+ali
piṛa - the other
āḻi - sea; ocean
piṛavāḻi is split also into piṛavi+āḻi
piṛavi - of birth
āḻi - the ocean
nīntal - swimming
aritu - is impossible.

Literal Meaning:

(1) Except to those who reached the foot of the Merciful, the Ocean of Virtue, it is impossible to swim the other ocean (the ocean of vice).

(2) Except to those who reached the foot of the Merciful, the Ocean of Virtue, it is impossible to swim the ocean of births.

9

koḷil poṛiyil kuṇamilavē eṇkuṇattāṉ
tāḷai vaṇaṅkāt talai.

koḷil - koḷ+il
koḷ - property; quality
il - without; not having
poṛiyil - like the senses
kuṇam - properties (Skt. guṇ)
ilavē - have not at all

eṇ - eight ; thinkable meaning cherishable
kuṇattān - He of attributes
tāḷai - the foot
vanaṅkā - that which does not adore or worship
talai - the head, here heads.

Literal Meaning: The heads that do not worship the foot of Him of cherishable/eight attributes do not have the properties at all like the senses without quality.

10

piṛavi-p peruṅ kadal nīntuvar nīntār
iṛaivan adicēra tār.

piṛavi - birth ; of birth
perum - the vast
kadal - the sea
nīntuvar - will swim ; can swim
nīntar - (they) cannot swim
iṛaivan - the Lord ; here the Lord's
adi - the foot, here the feet
cērātar - those not united

Literal Meaning : (They) will swim the vast sea of birth (who are united to the feet of the Lord). Those not united to the feet of the Lord cannot swim (it). [Note : The meaning of the words in brackets is implied.]

11

vānīntṛ-ulakam vaḻaṅki varutalāl
tānamiḻtam entṛunaraṛ pāttṛu.

vān - the sky ; rain
nintṛu - standing ; continuing
ulakam - the world
vaḻaṅki - subsisting
varutalāl - as from the coming

valaṅki varutal - because of continuing the custom
ulakam vaḻaṅki varutal - The world continues its custom
tān - itself
amiḻtam - nectar
entṛu - as
uṇarar - being understood
pātṛu - the quality of
tānamiḻtam entṛunararpāttṛu - It has the quality of being understood as nectar.

Literal Meaning : As by continued rain, the world continues its custom, it has the quality of being understood as nectar.

12

tuppārkku-t tuppāya tuppākki-t tuppārkku-t
tuppāya tūu maḻai.

tuppārkku - for those who eat ; eaters
tuppāya - food becoming
tuppākki - making food
tuppārkku - to the eaters
tuppāyatūum - food becoming
maḻai - rain

Literal Meaning: For those who eat, making food for eating, to the eaters it becomes itself food, the rain.

13

viṇṇintṛu poyppin virinīr viyanulakattu
uṇṇin tṛudattṛum paci.

viṇṇintru - viṇ+nintṛu
viṇ - the sky ; rain
nintṛu - standing still
poyppin - if it falsifies, if it deceives
poy - lie ; falsehood

viri - extend
nīr - water
virinīr - ocean
viyan - vast
ulakattu - in the world
uṇṇintṛu - uḷ+nintṛu
uḷ - within
nintṛu - standing ; stabilising
udattṛum - will torment
paci - hunger
nintṛudattṛum paci - hunger standing or abiding will torment or distress.

Literal Meaning: If the rain standing still deceives, in the vast world surrounded by the ocean, hunger stabilising itself will distress.

14

ērin uḻāar uḻavar puyalennum
vāri vaḷam kuntṛikkāl.

ērin - with the plough
uḻāar - is the lengthened form of *uḻar*
uḻār - will not plongh
uḻavar - the ploughman, here the ploughmen, husbandmen
ērin uḻāar uḻavar - The husbandmen cannot plough with the plough (Drew)
puyal - cloud
ennum - that which is
vāri - water
vaḷam - abundance
puyal ennum vāri - the water that is cloud
puyal ennum vāri vaḷam - The abundance of that source of profit which is called rain (Drew)
kuntṛikkāl - when it contracts or lessens
kuntṛi - contract
kāl - when.

Literal Meaning: Husbandmen will not plough with the plough, when the cloud of water contracts its abundance.

15

keduppatūum keṭṭarkku-c cārvāymattru
āṅkē eduppatūum ellām maḻai.

keduppatūum is the lengthened form of keduppatum
keduppatum - keduppatu+um
keduppatu - that which ruins, that which destroys
um - and
keṭṭārkku - to those destroyed
cārvāy - in support of ; becoming favourable
mattṛu - again
āṅkē : in the same way
eduppatūum is the lengthened form of eduppatum
eduppatu - to lift ; to raise
um - and
eduppatum - and to raise
ellām - all
maḻai - rain
ellām maḻai - rain all i.e. ; Rain is powerful to effect all these. (Drew)

Literal Meaning: Ruining and in support of the ruined again in the same way lifting them is all rain.

16

vicumpil tuḷivīḻin allālmat trāṅkē
pacumpul talai kāṇ paritu.

vicumpil vicumpu+il
vicumpu - the sky ; rain
il - of
tuḷi - drops
vicumpil tuḷi - drops of rain
vīḻin - if they fall

allāl - other than ; without ; except
viḻin allāl - if they do not fall
pacum pul - green grass
talai - tip ; head
pacum pul talai - a head of green grass (Drew)
kāṇparitu - cannot be seen.

Literal Meaning: Without drops of rain falling (one) cannot see (even) a tip of green grass.

17

neduṅkadalum tannīrmai kuntṛum tadinteḻili
tānalkā tāki vidin.

neduṇkadalum - nedum + kadalum
nedum - extending ; vast
kadalum - the sea also
tan - its own
nīrmai - nature ; quality ; character
kuntṛum - will diminish
tadintu - puffed up, which has absorbed
eḻili - cloud
tān - it
nalkātāki - nalkatu + āki
nalkātu āki vidin - if it does not give
nalkātu - does not give
āki - becomes so
vidin - if.

The belief is that pearls are produced by the pearl-oyster drinking in the drops of rain, and that these and other precious stones cannot be formed nor fish spawn, without rain.

Literal Meaning: The vast sea will diminish in its character, if the puffed up cloud (with water) does not give it.

18

ciṛappodu pūcanai cellātu vānam
vaṛakkumēl vānōrkkum īndu.

ciṟappodu - ciṟappu+odu
ciṟappu - anything distinguished ; festival
odu - along with
pūcanai - worship
cellātu - will not go on
vānam - the sky ; the heaven
vaṟakkumēl - if it dries up
vānōrkkum - for the gods also
īndu - here.

Literal Meaning: Along with festival, worship will not go on for the gods also, if the sky dries up.

19

tānam tavam irandum taṅkā viyanulakam
vānam vaḻanka tenin.

tānam - charity
tavam - penance
irandum - the two ; both
taṅkā - will not stay
viyanulakam - vast world, here, in the vast world
vānam - the sky
vaḻankatenin - if it does not give
vānam vaḻankātu enin - "if the heaven does not continue its custom" i.e., if it does not pour forth rain (Drew)

Literal Meaning: Charity and penance will not stay in the vast world, if the sky does not continue its custom.

20

nīrint ṟamaiya tulakenin yāryārkkum
vānint ṟamaiya toḻukku.

nīr - water ; nature ; quality
intṟu - without
amaiyātu - will not function ; will not be
ulakenin - if the world

yār yārkkum - for anyone
vān - sky ; rain
intṛu - without
amaiyātu - will not function ; will not be
o̱lukku - orderly conduct, flow of water

Literal Meaning: If the world cannot function without water, there will not be, for anyone, orderly conduct/flow of water without rain.

21

o̱lukkattu nīttār perumai vi̱luppattu
vēndum panuval tuṇivu.

o̱lukkattu - in conduct
nīttar - those who have renounced
nīttar - Those *who have abandoned* all desire of all created things. This word is synonymous with *tuṛantār* and is used for what is considered the highest exercise of religion, a forsaking of all desire; which desire is said to be two-fold; external, *puṛappattṛu*, or that which says "this is mine" and internal, *akappattṛu* or that which says "this is I". It denotes the order of Sanniyasis, whose duties are called *tuṛavaṛam*: the duties of the householder are called *illaṛam*: and these two form two grand divisions of duty treated of (in the aṛattuppāl) under the head of "Virtue".
perumai - greatness
vi̱luppattu - in excellence; in loftiness; of the sublimity
vēndum - require
panuval - that which says, meaning books and literature
panuval - of the codes; of the scriptures. This term from *pannal, to say*, declare (Ellis)
tuṇivu - decision ; conclusion

Literal Meaning: The greatness of those who renounced in righteous conduct, all literature will require for their loftiness.

22

tuṛantar perumi tuṇaikkūṛin vaiyattu
iṛantārai eṇṇikkoṇ datṛu.

tuṛantār - of those who renounced
perumai - greatness
tuṇai - the quantity
kūṛin - if said
tuṇai-k kūṛin - if the quantity is to be said ; if it is to be gauged
vaiyattu - on the earth
iṛantārai - the dead
eṇṇi - count
koṇdu - taking
eṇṇi-k-koṇdu - counting (continuous)
attṛu - like.

Literal Meaning: If the greatness of those who renounced is to be gauged, it is like counting the dead on earth.

23

irumai vakai terintu īndaṛam pūndār
perumai piṛankittṛ ulaku.

irumai - the two states
vakai - kind
terintu - knowing
īndu - here ; in this world
aṛam - virtue
pūndār - those who practise
perumai - greatness
piṛankittṛu - shines forth ; appears
ulaku - the world.

Literal Meaning: The greatness of those who practise virtue here knowing the two kinds of states shines forth in the world.

24

uranennum tōṭṭiyān ōraintum kāppān
varanennum vaippiṟkōr vittu.

uran - wisdom ; strength of mind ; fortitude
ennum - which is called
tōṭṭiyān - with the hook
tōṭṭi - is the hook by which the elephant is guided; the five senses are compared to five elements (Drew).
ōr - one used adjectively
aintum - the five
kāppān - one who protects ; guards ; controls
varan - boon ; bliss
vaippiṟku - for the place
ōr - one
vittu - seed.

Literal Meaning: One who controls the five with the hook of wisdom is a seed for the place of bliss (heaven).

25

aintavittān āttṟal akalvicumpu ḷārkōmaṉ
intiranē cālum kari.

aintu - the five
avittān - He who extinguished
āttṟal - might ; power
akal - expanding ; vast
vicumpu - sky
vicumpuḷār - vicumpu + uḷār
uḷār - uḷ + ar
vicumpu - sky

uḷār - He who is
kōman - the Lord, the king
intiranē - Indra himself
cālum - sufficient
kari - witness.

Literal Meaning: Indra, the king of the expanding sky is himself the witness to the might of him who extinguished the five.

26

ceyaṛkariya ceyvār periyar ciṛiyar
ceyaṛkariya ceykalā tār.

ceyaṛkariya - things hard to accomplish
ceyvār - will do
periyar - the great ones
ciṛiyar - the little ones
ceyaṛkariya - things hard to accomplish
ceykalātār - those who do not.

Literal Meaning: The great ones will do things hard to accomplish; the little ones are those who will not do things hard to accomplish.

27

cuvaiyoḷi ūrōcai nāttramen tṛaintin
vakaiterivān kaṭṭē ulaku.

cuvai - taste
oḷi - light; sight
ūrōcai - uru+ōcai
ūṛu - touch
ōcai - sound
nāttram - smell
entṛaintin - entṛu+aintin
entṛu - which is said
aintin - of the five
vakai - the kind; the mode; the nature

terivān - he who knows ; he who understands
kaṭṭē - within himself
ulaku - the world.

Literal Meaning: The world is with him only who understands the (properties of the) five called taste, sight, touch, sound and smell.

28

niṛaimoḻi māntar perumai nilattu
maṛaimoḻi kāṭṭi vidum.

niṛai - full
moḻi - word
niṛaimoḻi - "full-worded men"; men whose every word will be accomplished, whether it be a curse or a blessing. (Drew)
māntar - men
perumai - greatness
nilattu - in the world
maṛai - hidden ; concealed
moḻi - word
maṛai moḻi - this is said to mean their *mantrams*. (Drew)
kāṭṭi vidum - will show ; will reveal.

Literal Meaning: The greatness of full-worded men (their) hidden word will reveal in the world.

29

kuṇamennum kuntṛēṛi nintṛār vekuḷi
kanamēyum kāttal aritu.

kuṇam - quality ; attribute (virtue)
ennum - which is called
kuṇam - "good dispositions"—those which are enjoined on the ascetic are of course referred to. (Drew)
kuntṛu - hill

ēri - ascending
nintṛār - those who stand
vekuḷi - anger ; wrath
kanamēyum - even for a moment
kāttal - to protect ; to stand
aritu - difficult.

Literal Meaning: It is difficult to stand even for a moment the wrath of those who ascended the hill of virtue and stand on it.

30

antaṇar enpōr aṛavōrmat tṛevvuyirkkum
centaṇmai pūndoḻuka lān.

antaṇan - is derived from *am*, *beauty* and *taṇmai*, literally *coolness*, *freshness*, figuratively, *kindness*, *mercy* and the compound means therefore, *beautifully merciful*. (Ellis)

antaṇar - "Beautiful, cool minded." This is a name given to Brahmins ; and the author thus insinuates that the virtuous man is the true Brahmin. Antaṇan is also one of the names of God. (Drew)

antaṇar - is the plural of antaṇan
antaṇar - those who are beautifully merciful
enpōr - are, who are called
aṛavōr - those of virtue
mattṛu - a particle which seems to have no meaning ; often marks an antithesis = 'but' (Pope)
evvuyirkkum - *to any life*, meaning, *to all lives*.
centaṇmai - cem + taṇmai
cem - right ; kind ; true
taṇmai - coolness ; freshness ; mercy
pūndoḻukalān - pundu + oḻukalan
pūndu - having put on
oḻukalān - as (they) live.

Literal Meaning: Those of virtue, are called the beautifully merciful, as they live by being truly merciful to all lives.

31

ciṟappīnum celvamum īnum aṟattiṅūunku
ākkam evanō uyirkku.

ciṟappu - speciality ; glory ; distinction
īnum - will give
celvam - wealth
celvamum - wealth also
īnum - will give
aṟattinūṅku - arattin + ūnku
aṟattin - of virtue
ūṅku - better than
ākkam - gain ; profit ; prosperity
evanō - a term implying interrogation, an expletive
uyirkku - to lives.

Literal Meaning: (It) will give glory and wealth. What greater prosperity to lives than that of virtue!

32

aṟattinūuṅku ākkamum illai atanai
maṟattalin ūṅkillai kēdu.

aṟattinūuṅku - better than virtue
ākkamum - wealth at all ; gain at all
illai - not
atanai - it
maṟattalin - forgetting
ūṅku - than
illai - not
kēdu - disaster ; evil.

Literal Meaning: There is no greater wealth at all than virtue; there is no greater evil than forgetting it.

33

oḷḷum vakaiyān aṛavinai ōvātē
cellumvāy ellām ceyal.

oḷḷum - (which) is possible
vakaiyān - by way
aṛavinai - virtue
ōvātē - without break ; continuously
cellum - wherever (you) go
vāy - places
ellām - in all
ceyal - do.

Literal Meaning: Whatever is possible, do virtue, wherever (you) go uninterruptedly.

34

manattukkaṇ mācilan ātal anaittaṛan
ākula nīra piṛa.

manattu - of the mind
kaṇ - place
mācilan without dirt; pure ; spotless
ātal - becoming
anaittu - that is all
aṛan - virtue
ākula - of noise ; empty sound and show
nīra - quality
piṛa - the others.

Literal Meaning: Being spotless in mind is virtue; that is all ; the others are of the quality of sound and show (ostentation).

35

aḻukkāṛu avāvekuḷi innāccol nānkum
iḻukkā iyantṛatu aṛam.

aḻukkāṛu - envy
avā - lust

vekuḷi - anger
innā-c-col - not sweet word, bitter word
nānkum - the four
iḻukka - without blemish
iyantṛatu - that which functions
aṛam - virtue.

Literal Meaning: Virtue functions without blemish (avoiding) the four—envy, lust, anger and bitter word.

36

antṛaṛivām ennātu aṛam ceyka mattṛatu
pontruṅkāl pontṛat tuṇai.

antṛaṛivām - antru + aṛivām
antṛu - that day
arivām - we will do
ennātu - not saying
aṛam - virtue
ceyka - do, practise
mattṛatu - that one
pontruṅkāl - at the time of dying
pontrā - not dying, deathless
tuṇai - companion.

Literal Meaning: Not saying we'ḷl do that day, practise virtue; that is a deathless companion at the time of death.

37

aṛattāru ituvena vēndā civikai
poṛuttanōdu ūrntan idai.

aṛattāru - aṛattu+āṛu
aṛattu - of virtue
āṛu - the path ; the effect
ituvena - this one
vēnda - needs no telling

civikai - palanquin
poṟuttanōdu - with him who carries
ūrntan - he who rides
idai - between them, with them.

Literal Meaning:

(1) The path of virtue needs no telling; it is both with the palanquin bearer and the rider.

(2) The effect or result of virtue needs no telling. It is between the palanquin bearer and the rider thereon.

38

vīḻnāḷ padāmai nantṟāttṟin ahtoruvan
vāḻnāḷ vaḻiyadaikkum kal.

viḻ - falling
nāḷ - day
viḻnal - fallen day; a day in which no virtuous action is performed
padāmai - not going waste
nantṟu - good; well;
āttṟin - if practised
ahtu - that is
oruvan - one's
vāḻnāḷ - day of life meaning future births
vāḻ nāḷ - the days of life in the different births (Drew)
vaḻi - way; path
adaikkum - blocking
kal - stone.

Literal Meaning: If good is practised without days going waste that is one's blocking stone to one's (future) life.

39

aṟattān varuvatē inpam mattṟ ellām
puṟatta pukaḻum ila.

aṛattān - of virtue
varuvatē - that which flows out only
inpam - happiness
mattṛellām - all the others
puṛatta - contrary ; outside
pukaḻum - praise
ila - devoid of ; not.

Literal Meaning: That which flows out of only viritue is happiness ; all the others are contrary to it and devoid of praise.

40

ceyaṛpālatu ōrum aṛanē oruvaṛkku
uyaṛpaālatu ōrum paḻi.

ceyal - the doing
pālatu - that which is to be done naturally
ōrum - an expletive
aṛanē - only virtue
oruvaṛkku - to one person, here, to each person
uyar - to lift, to do away with ; remove
pālatu - that which is to be done naturally
paḻi - vice ; evil.

Literal Meaning: That which is to be done by each person is virtue; that which is to be avoidəd is vice.

APPENDIX II

ENGLISH MEANINGS FOR TAMIL WORDS USED IN THE COUPLETS

[The numerals refer to the couplets wherein the words occur.]

akaram - the letter 'A'; compared to *āti pakavan*; the first letter in all the alphabets; 1
akal - vast; 25
akal vicumpu - vast sky; 25
adi - foot; 3, 4, 10
adaikkum - blocking; 38
atanai - it; 32
atu - it; 32, 36
antaṇar - those who are beautifully merciful; 30
antaṇan - The Supreme Being; 8
amiḻtam - nectar, ambrosia; rain is compared to *amiḻtam*; 11
amaiyātu - goes not on its way (Pope); will not function; 20
aritu - is impossible; 7, 8, 16, 29
ariya - difficult to accomplish; 26
allāl - other than, without, except; 7, 8, 16
avā - lust; desire; 35
avittān - He who extinguished; 6, 25
aḻukkāṟu - envy; 35
attṟu - like; a particle of similitude; 22
aṟattāṟu - the path of virtue; the effect of virtue; 37
aṟattinūnku - better than virtue; greater than virtue; 31, 32
aṟam - virtue; 8, 23, 35
am pūndar - those who have arrayed themselves in virtue
aṟavāḻi antaṇan - He who is beautifully merciful, the ocean of virtue; The Supreme Being; 8
aṟavinai - virtuous action, 33
aṟavōr - those of virtue; those who have renounced; 30
aṟan - virtue; 34, 40
aṟivan - He who is Pure Knowledge; 2
aṟivām - we will know; 36
an - particle 2, 32
antṟu - that day; 36
antṟu aṟivām - We will know that day; 36
anaittu - it is thus much: that is all; 34
ākkam - wealth; gain; 32
ākki - making; 12
āki - becomes so; 17
ākulam - noise; empty sound and show; 34
aṅkē - there; 15, 16
ātal - becoming; 34
āti - the original; the first; the beginning; 1
āy - becoming; 15
āya - which comes; 2, 12
āḻi - ocean; 8
āḻi nīntal - swimming the ocean; 8
āttṟin - if practised; 38

ān - case ending; 11, 24, 30, 33, 39
idumpai - affliction; 4
itu - this; 37 [25
intirane - Indra himself;
iyantṛatu - that which functions; that which has proceeded naturally (Pope); 35
irandu - two; 19
irumai - both states or worlds - this and the next; the two states; 23
irumai vakai terintu - knowing the two kinds of state; 23
iruvinai - two acts; 5
iruḷ cēr iruvinai - the two acts leading to darkness; the two acts united with darkness; 5
il - without; not having; 9
il - case ending; 6
illātān - He who has not; 7
illai - not; 32
ilavē - have not at all; there are not at all; 9
ila - there are not; 4, 9
ilan - who is without; 34
ilan ātal - he who is becoming without; 34
ilān - He who does not possess; 4 [35
iḻukka - without blemish;
iṛantār - the dead; 22
iṛaivan - the Lord; God; 5, 10
in - by (case ending) 9, 14
inpam - happiness; 39
innā-c-col - not sweet word; bitter word; 35
īndu - here; 18, 23
īnum - will give; 31 [13
udattṛum - will torment;
unaraṛ pāttṛu - being understood as fit; it ought to be understood; 11
um - and; also; 5, 12, 15, 18, 20, 24, 30, 32, 35
uyarpālatu - that which has to be done away with; 40
uyir - life; 30, 31 [24
uran-wisdom; knowledge;
uvamai - likeness; 7
uḻavar - ploughmen; husbandmen; 14
uḻāar - will not plough; 14
uḷ - in (case ending); 13
ūṇku - more; better; 31, 32
evvuyirkkum - to any life; to all lives; 30
eduppatu - to lift up; to raise; 15
eṇ - eight; cherishable; 9
eṇ kuṇattān - He of eight attributes; He of cherishable attributes; 9
eṇṇikkondattṛu - like counting; 22
ellām - all; 1, 15, 33, 39
evanō - a term implying interrogation; 31
en - what; 2
en kol - what; *kol* is an expletive sometimes used as a doubtful interrogation; 2
enpōr - who are called; 30
entṛa - which is said; 27
entṛu - saying (This word has the meaning of the conj. particle 'that'); 11
ennātu - not saying; 36
ennum - which is called; 14, 24, 29
ena - to say; 37

enin - if ; 19, 20
ē - used as particle ; 15, 16, 33. used for emphasis ; 1, 9, 40 used for differntiating ; 25, 27, 39
ēkinān - He who walked ; 3
ēl - if ; 18
ēṟi - ascending ; 29
ēṟi nintṟār - ascending stood ; 29
ai - case ending ; 9, 22, 32
aintin vakai - the nature of the five ; 27
odu - with (case ending) ; 18, 37 [40
oruvaṟku - to one person ;
ollum - possible, 33
oḻukkattu nīttār - those in righteous conduct who renounced ; 21
oḻukka neṟi - the path of ethical code ; 6
oḻukkam - ethical code ; 6
oḻukku - orderly conduct ; flow of rain ; 20
oḻukalān - as they live ; 30
ō - expletive ; 31
ōcai - sound ; 27
ulakam - the world ; 11, 13, 19
ulaku - the world ; 1, 20, 23, 27
ōr - one, used adjectively ; 24
ōrum - expletive, 40
ōvātē - without break ; continuously ; 33
kadal - sea ; 10, 17
kaṇ - at (case ending) ; 34
kaṇam - moment ; 29
kaṇamēyum - even for a moment ; 29
kavalai - anxiety ; worry ; care ; 7
kattṟatanāl - from that which was learned ; 2
kāṭṭividum - will show ; will reveal ; 28
kaṇpu - seeing ; 16
kattal - protecting ; 29
kāppān - one who protects, guards, controls ; 24
kāl - time ; 36
ku - to (case ending) 4, 7, 8, 12, 15, 18, 20, 24, 26, 30, 31, 40
kuṇattān - He of the attributes ; 9
kuṇam - attribute ; 9, 29
kuntṟikkāl - when it contracts or lessens ; 14
kuntṟum - will diminish ; 17
kūrin - if said ; 22
keṭṭārkku - to those destroyed ; 15
kēdu - disaster, evil, 32
koṇdu - taking ; 22
kol - is a particle, sometimes as here expletive ; 2
kōḷ - quality ; property ; 9
kōḷil - not having property or quality ; 9 [25
kōmān - the lord, the king;
cārvāy - in support of ; 15
cālum - sufficient ; 25
civikai - palanquin ; 37
civikai poruttanōdu - with him who rides on the palanquin ; 37
ciṟappu - speciality ; glory ; distinction ; release ; 31
ciṟiyar - the little ones ; 26
cuvai - taste ; 27
centaṇmai - kind coolness; grace ; 30

ceyka - do; practise; 36
ceykalātār - those who do not do; 26
ceyvār - will do; 26
ceyal - do; 33
ceyaṛku ariya - things hard to accomplish; 26
ceyaṛku ariya ceykalātār- those who do not do things hard to accomplish; 26
ceyaṛku ariya ceyvār - those who will do things hard to accomplish; 26
ceyaṛpālatu - that which ought to be done; that the doing of which is natural; 40
cellātu - will not go on; 18
celvam - wealth; 31
cērntār - those who reached; those who are united to; 3, 4, 7, 8
cērntārkku - to those who reached, to those who are united to; 4, 7, 8
cērā - will not reach; will not come; 5 [10
cerātār - those not united,
col - word; 35
taṅkā - will not stay; 19
tadintu - puffed up; absorbed; 17
talai - head; 9, 16
tavam - penance; 19
tan - its own; 17
tanakku - to oneself; 7
tanakkuvamai illātān - He who has no similitude to Himself; 7
tāḷ - foot; 2, 7, 8, 9
tāḷ cērntār - those who reached foot; 7, 8
tān - onself; 11, 17
tānam - charity; 19
tīr - devoid of; free from; 6
tuṇivu - decision; conclusion; 21
tuṇai - companion; 36
tuṇai - quantity; 22
tuṇai-k-kūrin - if the quantity is to be said; if it is to be gauged; 22
tuppār - the eaters; 12
tuppārkku - for those who eat; 12
tuppu - food which is enjoyed (Pope); 12
tuppāya - sweet; pleasant; 12
tuppākki - making food; 12
tuppāyatu - enjoyment; 12
tuḷi - drop; 16
tuḷi vīḻin - if drops fall; 16
tuṛantār - those who renounced; 22
terintu - knowing; 23
terivān - he who knows; 27
toḻāar - is the lengthened form of toḻār; 2
toḻār - they do not worship; 2
tōṭṭi - hook; 24 [24
tōṭṭiyān - with the hook;
nalkātu - does not grant a favour; 17
nattṛāl - nal+tal; 2
nattṛāl - good foot; 2
nāḷ - day; 38
nāttṛam - smell; 27
nānku - four; 35
nilam - the earth; the world; 3, 28
nilamicai - on the earth; over the earth; 3
niṛai - full; 28

niṛai moḻi - full word; 28
niṛai moḻi māntar - full-worded men; 28
nintṛār - those who stand; 6, 29
nintṛu - standing; 11, 13
nīdu - long; 3, 6
nīdu vaḻvār - will live long; 6
nīttār - those who renounced; 21
nīttār perumai - greatness of those who renounced; 21
nīntal - swimming; 8
nīntār - will not swim; 10
nīntuvar - will swim; 10
nīr - water; 13, 20
nīrmai - quality; nature; character; 17
nīra - of quality
neduṅkadal - extending sea; deep sea; 17
neṛi - path; 6
neṛi nintṛār - those who adhere to the path; 6
pakavan - the Deity; the Lord; 1
paci - hunger; 13
pacum pul - green grass; 16
padāamai - going waste; 38
payan - advantage; result; use; 2
paḻi - vice; evil; 40
panuval - that which says, meaning books and literature; 21
pālatu - that which is to be done naturally; that which ought to be done; 40
piṛa - the other; 8
piṛavāḻi - the other sea; the sea of births; 8
piṛavi - birth; 10
piṛavi-p-peruṅkadal - the vast sea of births; 10
pukaḻ - praise; 5
puyal - cloud; 14
purintār - those who practised; 5
pul - grass; 16
pūcani - worship; 18
pūndār - those who have put on; 23
pūndu - having put on; 30
periyar - the great ones; 26
perum - big; 10
peruṅ kadal - the big sea; 10
perumai - greatness; 21, 22, 23, 28
poy - falsehood; 6
poytīr - devoid of falsehood; 6
poyppin - if it falsifies; 13
poruḷ - meaning; truth; 5
poṛi - a sense; organ of sense;
poṛi vāyil - the gateway of the senses; 6
poṛuttān - he who carries; 37
pontṛā - undying; 36
pontṛāttuṇai - undying companion; 36
pontṛuṅkāḷ - at the time of dying; 36
malar - blossomed flower; 3
malar micai - on the flower; over the flower; 3
malar micai ēkinān - He who walked on the flower; 3
mattṛu - again; 16
mattṛu is an expletive; 36

maṭṭṛu, a particle which seems to have no meaning; often marks an antithesis=but (Pope); 30
maṭṭṛu - besides; though thus translated this word is properly a noun, meaning *another, a different one* (Ellis)
maṛattalin - in forgetting; 32
maṛai - hidden; concealed; *mantra*, scripture; 28
manakkavalai - worry of the mind; 7
manattukkaṇ - in the place of mind; 34
manam - mind; 7, 34
mācu; dirt; impurity; 34
mācilan - macu+ilan
mācilan - He who is without dirt; 34
māṭṭu - in or to; 5
māṇadi - lofty foot; 3
māntar - men; 28
māttral - changing; 7
micai - on, over; 3
mutala - have as first; 1
mutaṭṭṛu - has as first; 1
yāndum - at any time; 4
yār yārkkum - for anybody; 20 [33
vakai - kind, way; 23, 27,
vanaṅka - that which does not adore or worship; 9
varan - boon; bliss; 24
varutal - coming; 11
vaḻaṅkātu - does not continue custom; 19
vaḻaṅki varutal - comes to subsist; 11
vaḻam - profit; 14
vaṛakkum - dry up; 18
vāy - place; 33
vāyil - gateway; 6
vāri - water; 14
vāl - pure; 2
vēnudtal - attachment, desire; 4
vēndum - require
vālaṛivan - He who is pure Knowledge; 2
vāḻnāḷ - day of living; 38
vāḻvār - will live; 3, 6
vān - sky; rain; 11, 20
vānōr - those of the sky, the gods; 18
vicumpu - the sky; 16, 25
vicumpuḷār - vicumpu+uḷār
vicumpuḷār - those in the sky; the gods; 25
vidum - an auxiliary verb; 28
viṉ - the sky; the rain; 13
viṭṭu - seed; 24
viyan - wide; 13, 19
viyanulakam - wide world; 13, 19
viri - vast, expanding; 13
viri nīr - expansive water; the sea; 13
viḻuppam - excellence, loftiness, sublimity; 21
viḻuppattu - in excellence; 21
vinai - act; 33
viḻnāḷ - fallen day; 38
viḻin - if it falls; 16
vekuḷi - anger; 29, 35
vēnda - no need; 37
vēndāmai - aversion, desirelessness; 4
vaippu - place; world; 24
vaiyam - earth; 22
vaiyattu - in the place of the earth; 22

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